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Writings of Celia Thaxter

POEMS. *Appledore Edition.*

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AMONG THE ISLES OF SHOALS. Illustrated.

AN ISLAND GARDEN.

LETTERS OF CELIA THAXTER. With three portraits.

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
BOSTON AND NEW YORK

LETTERS OF CELIA THAXTER

LETTERS OF CELIA THAXTER

EDITED BY HER FRIENDS

A. F. AND R. L.

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
The Riverside Press Cambridge

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TWELFTH IMPRESSION

NOTE

THIS volume, made up of extracts from the letters of Celia Thaxter, will serve, we trust, to give an idea, even to those who never knew her, of her nature and development.

Except for a light from within, which irradiated the world she lived in, her life could easily have worn the sad-colored hues of ordinary mortality. But the radiance of her nature was like an ever-rising sun of affection, constantly warming the hearts whereon it shone; and where was the pilgrim who did not gladly open his window to that East?

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CELIA THAXTER

BORN JUNE, 1835; DIED AUGUST, 1894

If it were ever intended that a desolate island in the deep sea should be inhabited by one solitary family, then indeed Celia Thaxter was the fitting daughter of such a house.

In her history of the group of islands, which she calls "Among the Isles of Shoals," she portrays, in a prose which for beauty and wealth of diction has few rivals, the unfolding of her own nature under influences of sky and sea, and solitude and untrammeled freedom, such as have been almost unknown to civilized humanity in any age of the world. She speaks also of the effect produced, as she fancied, upon the minds of men by the eternal sound of the sea; a tendency to wear away the edge of human thought and perception. But this was far from being the case with regard to herself. Her eyesight was keener, her speech more distinct, the lines of her thoughts more clearly defined, her verse more strongly marked in its

form, and the accuracy of her memory more to be relied upon, than was the case with almost any one of her contemporaries. Her painting, too, upon porcelain possessed the same character. Her knowledge of the flowers, and especially of the seaweeds, with which she decorated it, was so exact that she did not require the originals before her vision. They were painted upon her mind's eye, where every filament and every shade seemed to be recorded. These "green growing things" had been the beloved companions of her childhood, as they continued to be of her womanhood, and even to reproduce their forms in painting was a delight to her. The written descriptions of natural objects gave her history a place among the pages which possess a perennial existence. While White's "Selborne," and the pictures of Bewick, and Thoreau's "Walden," and the "Autobiography of Richard Jefferies" endure, so long will "Among the Isles of Shoals" hold its place with all lovers of nature. She says in one place: "All the pictures over which I dream are set in this framework of the sea, that sparkled and sang, or frowned and threatened, in the ages that are gone as it does to-day."

The solitude of Celia Thaxter's childhood, which was not solitude, surrounded as she was with the love of a father and a mother all tenderness, and brothers dear to her as her own life, developed in the child strange faculties. She was five years old when the family left Portsmouth, — old enough, given her inborn power of enjoyment of nature, to delight in the free air and the wonderful sights around her.

Her father seems to have been a man of awful energy of will. Some disappointment in his hope of a public career, it has been said, decided him to take the step of withdrawing himself forever from the world of the mainland, and this attitude he appears to have sustained unflinchingly to the end. Her mother, with a heart stayed as unflinchingly upon love and obedience, seems to have followed him without a murmur, leaving every dear association of the past as though it had not been. From this moment she became, not the slave, but the queen of her affections, and when she died, in 1877, the sun appeared to set upon her daughter's life. On the morning after Mrs. Thaxter's sudden death, seventeen years later, a friend

asked her eldest son where his mother was, with the intent to discover if she had been well enough to leave her room. "Oh," he replied, "her mother came in the night and took her away." This reply showed how deeply all who were near to Celia Thaxter were impressed with the fact that to see her mother again was one of the deepest desires of her heart.

The development wrought in her eager character by those early days of exceptional experience gives a new sense of what our poor humanity may achieve, left face to face with the vast powers of nature.

In speaking of the energy of Samuel Haley, one of the early settlers of the islands, she says he learned to live as independently as possible of his fellow-men; "for that is one of the first things a settler on the Isles of Shoals finds it necessary to learn." Her own lesson was learned perfectly. The sunrise was as familiar to her eyes as the sunset, and early and late the activity of her mind was rivaled by the ceaseless industry of her hands.

Appledore was too far away in winter from the village at Star Island for any regular or frequent communication between them. Even

so late as in the month of May she records watching a little fleet beating up for shelter under the lee of Appledore to ride out a storm. "They were in continual peril. . . . It was not pleasant to watch them as the early twilight shut down over the vast weltering desolation of the sea, to see the slender masts waving helplessly from one side to another. . . . Some of the men had wives and children watching them from lighted windows at Star. What a fearful night for them! They could not tell from hour to hour, through the thick darkness, if yet the cables held; they could not see till daybreak whether the sea had swallowed up their treasures. I wonder the wives were not white-haired when the sun rose and showed them those little specks yet rolling in the breakers!" How clearly these scenes were photographed on the sensitive plate of her mind! She never forgot nor really lost sight of her island people. Her sympathy drew them to her as if they were her own, and the little colony of Norwegians was always especially dear to her. "How pathetic," she says, "the gathering of women on the headlands, when out of the sky swept the squall that sent the small

boat staggering before it, and blinded the eyes, already drowned in tears, with sudden rain that hid sky and sea and boats from their eager gaze!"

What she was, what her sympathy was, to those people, no one can ever quite express. The deep devotion of their service to her brothers and to herself, through the long solitude of winter and the storm of summer visitors, alone could testify. Such service cannot be bought: it is the devotion born of affection and gratitude and admiration. Speaking of one of the young women who grew up under her eye, she often said: "What could I do in this world without Mina Berntsen? I hope she will be with me when I die." And there indeed, at the last, was Mina, to receive the latest word and to perform the few sad offices.

To tell of the services Mrs. Thaxter rendered to some of the more helpless people about her, in the dark season, when no assistance from the mainland could be hoped for, would make a long and noble story in itself. Her good sense made her an excellent doctor; the remedies she understood she was always on hand to apply at the right moment. Some-

times she was unexpectedly called to assist in the birth of a child, when knowledge and strength she was hardly aware of seemed to be suddenly developed. But the truth was she could do almost anything; and only those who knew her in these humbler human relations could understand how joyous she was in the exercise of her duties, or how well able to perform them. Writing to Mina from the Shoals once in March, she says: "This is the time to be here; this is what I enjoy! To wear my old clothes every day, grub in the ground, dig dandelions and eat them too, plant my seeds and watch them, fly on the tricycle, row in a boat, get into my dressing-gown right after tea and make lovely rag rugs all the evening, and nobody to disturb us, — *this* is fun!" In the house and out of it she was capable of everything. How beautiful her skill was as a dressmaker, the exquisite lines in her own black or gray or white dresses testified to every one who ever saw her. She never wore any other colors, nor was anything like "trimming" ever seen about her; there were only the fine, free outlines, and a white handkerchief folded carefully about her neck and shoulders.

In her young days it was the same, with a difference! She was slighter in figure then, and overflowing with laughter, the really beautiful but noisy laughter which died away as the repose of manner of later years fell upon her. I can remember her as I first saw her, with the sea-shells which she always wore then around her neck and wrists, and a gray poplin dress defining her lovely form. She talked simply and fearlessly, while her keen eyes took in everything around her; she paid the tribute of her instantaneous laughter to the wit of others, — never too eager to speak, and never unwilling. Her sense of beauty, not vanity, caused her to make the most of the good physical points she possessed; therefore, although she grew old early, the same general features of her appearance were preserved. She was almost too well known even to strangers, in these later years at the Shoals, to make it worth while to describe the white hair carefully put up to preserve the shape of the head, and the small silver crescent which she wore above her forehead; but her manner had become very quiet and tender, more and more affectionate to her friends, and appreciative of all men. One

of those who knew her latterly wrote me: "Many of her letters show her boundless sympathy, her keen appreciation of the best in those whom she loved, and her wonderful growth in beauty and roundness of character. And how delightful her enthusiasms were! As pure and clear as those of a child! She was utterly unlike any one in the world, so that few people really understood her. But it seems to me that her trials softened and mellowed her, until she became like one of her own beautiful flowers, perfect in her full development; then in a night the petals fell, and she was gone."

The capabilities which were developed in her by the necessities of the situation, during her life at the Shoals in winter, were more various and remarkable than can be fitly told. The glimpses which we get in her letters of the many occupations show what energy she brought to bear upon the difficulties of the place.

In "Among the Isles of Shoals" she says: "After winter has fairly set in, the lonely dwellers at the Isles of Shoals find life quite as much as they can manage, being so entirely thrown upon their own resources that it requires all the philosophy at their disposal to answer

the demand. One goes to sleep in the muffled roar of the storm, and wakes to find it still raging with senseless fury."

It was not extraordinary that the joy of human intercourse, after such estrangement, became a rapture to so loving a nature as Celia Laighton's; nor that, very early, before the period of fully ripened womanhood, she should have been borne away from her island by a husband, a man of birth and education, who went as missionary to the wild fisher folk on the adjacent island called Star.

The exuberant joy of her unformed maidenhood, with its power of self-direction, attracted the shy, intellectual student nature of Mr. Thaxter. He could not dream that this careless, happy creature possessed the strength and sweep of wing which belonged to her own seagull. In good hope of teaching and developing her, of adding much in which she was uninstructed to the wisdom which the influences of nature and the natural affections had bred in her, he carried his wife to a quiet inland home, where three children were very soon born to them. Under the circumstances, it was not extraordinary that his ideas of education were

not altogether successfully applied; she required more strength than she could summon, more adaptability than many a grown woman could have found, to face the situation, and life became difficult and full of problems to them both. Their natures were strongly contrasted, but perhaps not too strongly to complement each other, if he had fallen in love with her as a woman, and not as a child. His retiring, scholarly nature and habits drew him away from the world; her overflowing, sun-loving being, like a solar system in itself, reached out on every side, rejoicing in all created things.

Her introduction to the world of letters was by means of her first poem, "Land-Locked," which, by the hand of a friend, was brought to the notice of James Russell Lowell, at that time editor of "The Atlantic." He printed it at once, without exchanging a word with the author. She knew nothing about it until the magazine was laid before her. This recognition of her talent was a delight indeed, and it was one of the happiest incidents in a life which was already overclouded with difficulties and sorrow. It will not be out of place to reprint this poem here, because it must assure

every reader of the pure poetic gift which was in her. In form, in movement, and in thought it is as beautiful as her latest work.

LAND-LOCKED.

Black lie the hills; swiftly doth daylight flee;
And, catching gleams of sunset's dying smile,
Through the dusk land for many a changing mile
The river runneth softly to the sea.

O happy river, could I follow thee!
O yearning heart, that never can be still!
O wistful eyes, that watch the steadfast hill,
Longing for level line of solemn sea!

Have patience; here are flowers and songs of birds,
Beauty and fragrance, wealth of sound and sight,
All summer's glory thine from morn till night,
And life too full of joy for uttered words.

Neither am I ungrateful; but I dream
Deliciously how twilight falls to-night
Over the glimmering water, how the light
Dies blissfully away, until I seem

To feel the wind, sea-scented, on my cheek,
To catch the sound of dusky, flapping sail,
And dip of oars, and voices on the gale
Afar off, calling low, — my name they speak!

O Earth! thy summer song of joy may soar
Ringing to heaven in triumph. I but crave
The sad, caressing murmur of the wave
That breaks in tender music on the shore.

With the growth of Mrs. Thaxter's children

and the death of her father, the love and duty she owed her mother caused her to return in the winter to the Shoals, although a portion of the summer was passed there as well.

But she had already tasted of the tree of knowledge, and the world outside beckoned to her with as fascinating a face as it ever presented to any human creature. It was during one of these returning visits to the Shoals that much of the delightful book from which I have quoted was written; a period when she had already learned something of the charms of society, — sufficient to accentuate her appreciation of her own past, and to rejoice in what a larger life now held in store for her.

Lectures, operas, concerts, theatres, pictures, music above all, — what were they not to her! Did artists ever before find such an eye and such an ear? She brought to them a spirit prepared for harmony, but utterly ignorant of the science of painting or music until the light of art suddenly broke upon her womanhood. Of what this new world was to her we find some hint, of course, in her letters; but no human lips, not even her own exuberant power of expression, could ever say how her existence was enriched

and made beautiful through music. Artists who sang to her, or those who rehearsed the finest music on the piano or violin or flute, or those who brought their pictures and put them before her while she listened, — they alone, in a measure, understood what these things signified, and how she was lifted quite away by them from the ordinary level of life. They were inspired to do for her what they could seldom do for any other creature, and her generous response, overflowing, almost extravagant in expression, was never half enough to begin to tell the new life they brought to her.

Mrs. Thaxter found herself, as the years went on, the centre of a company who rather selected themselves than were selected from the vast number of persons who frequented her brothers' "house of entertainment" at the islands. Her "parlor," as it was called, was a *milieu* quite as interesting as any of the "salons" of the past. Her pronounced individuality forbade the intrusion even of a fancy of comparison with anything else, and equally forbade the possibility of rivalry. There was only one thought in the mind of the frequenters of her parlor, — that of gratitude for the pleasure and

opportunity she gave them, and a genuine wish to please her and to become her friends. She possessed the keen instincts of a child with regard to people. If they were unlovable to her, if they were for any reason unsympathetic, nothing could bring her to overcome her dislike. She was in this particular more like some wild thing than a creature of the nineteenth century; indeed, one of her marked traits was a curious intractability of nature. I believe that no worldly motive ever influenced her relation with any human creature. Of course these native qualities made her more ardently devoted in her friendships; but it went hardly with her to ingratiate those persons for whom she felt a natural repulsion, or even sometimes to be gentle with them. Later in life she learned to call no man "common or unclean;" but coming into the world, as she did, full grown, like Minerva in the legend, with keen eyes, and every sense alive to discern pretension, untruth, ungodliness in guise of the church, and all the uncleanness of the earth, these things were as much a surprise to her as it was, on the other hand, to find the wondrous world of art and the lives of the saints. Perhaps no large social

success was ever achieved upon such unworldly conditions; she swung as free as possible of the world of society and its opinions, forming a centre of her own, built up on the sure foundations of love and loyalty. She saw as much as any woman of the time of large numbers of people, and she was able to give them the best kind of social enjoyment, — music, pictures, poetry, and conversation; the latter sometimes poor and sometimes good, according to the drift which swept through her beautiful room. Mrs. Thaxter was generous in giving invitations to her parlor, but to its frequenters she said, "If people do not enjoy what they find, they must go their way; my work and the music will not cease." The study of nature and art was always going forward either on or around her work-table. The keynote of conversation was struck there for those who were able to hear it. We were reminded of William Blake's verse: —

> "I give you the end of a golden string,
> Only wind it into a ball,
> It will lead you in at Heaven's gate,
> Built in Jerusalem wall."

Here it was that Whittier could be heard at his best, sympathetic, stimulating, uplifting, as he

alone could be, and yet as he, with his Quaker training to silence, was so seldom moved to prove himself. Here he would sit near her hour after hour; sometimes mending her æolian harp while they talked together, sometimes reading aloud to the assembled company.

Her gratitude to the men and women who brought music to her door knew no limit; it was strong, deep, and unforgetting. "What can I ever do for them," she would say, "when I remember the joy they bring me!"

"The dignity of labor" is a phrase we have often heard repeated in modern life, but it was one unnecessary to be spoken by Celia Thaxter. It may easily be said of her that one of the finest lessons she unconsciously taught was not only the value of labor, but the joy of doing things well. The necessities of her position, as I have already indicated, demanded a great deal, but she responded to the need with a readiness and generosity great enough to extort admiration from those who knew her. How much she contributed to the comfort of the lives of those she loved at the Shoals we have endeavored to show; how beautiful her garden was there, in the summer, all the world could see;

but at one period there was also a farm at Kittery Point, to be made beautiful and comfortable by her industry, where one of her sons still lives; and a *pied à terre* in Boston or in Portsmouth, whither she came in the winter with her eldest son, who was especially dependent upon her love and care: and all these changes demanded much of her time and strength.

She was certainly one of the busiest women in the world. Writing from Kittery Point, September 6, 1880, she says: "It is divinely lovely here, and the house is charming. I have brought a servant over from the hotel, and it is a blessing to be able to make them all comfortable; to set them down in the charming dining-room overlooking the smooth, curved crescent of sandy beach, with the long rollers breaking white, and the Shoals looming on the far sea-line. . . . But oh, how tired we all get! I shall be quite ready for my rest! Your weariest, loving C. T."

This note gives a picture of her life. She was always helping to make a bright spot around her; to give of herself in some way. There is a bit in her book which illustrates this instinct. The incident occurred during a long, dreary

storm at the Shoals. Two men had come in a boat, asking for help. "A little child had died at Star Island, and they could not sail to the mainland, and had no means to construct a coffin among themselves. All day I watched the making of that little chrysalis; and at night the last nail was driven in, and it lay across a bench, in the midst of the litter of the workshop, and a curious stillness seemed to emanate from the senseless boards. I went back to the house and gathered a handful of scarlet geranium, and returned with it through the rain. The brilliant blossoms were sprinkled with glittering drops. I laid them in the little coffin, while the wind wailed so sorrowfully outside, and the rain poured against the windows. Two men came through the mist and storm, and one swung the light little shell to his shoulder, and they carried it away, and the gathering darkness shut down and hid them as they tossed among the waves. I never saw the little girl, but where they buried her I know; the lighthouse shines close by, and every night the quiet, constant ray steals to her grave and softly touches it, as if to say, with a caress, 'Sleep well! Be thankful you are spared so much that I see

humanity endure, fixed here forever where I stand.' "

We have seen the profound love she felt for, and the companionship she found in, nature and natural objects; but combined with these sentiments, or developed simply by her love to speak more directly, was a very uncommon power of observation. This power grew day by day, and the delightful correspondence which existed between Bradford Torrey and herself, although they had never met face to face, bears witness to her constant mental record and memory respecting the habits of birds and woodland manners. Every year we find her longing for larger knowledge; books and men of science attracted her; and if her life had been less intensely laborious, in order to make those who belonged to her comfortable and happy, what might she not have achieved! Her nature was replete with boundless possibilities, and we find ourselves asking the old, old question, Must the artist forever crush the wings by which he flies against such terrible limitations? — a question never to be answered in this world.

Her observations began with her earliest breath at the islands. "I remember," she says,

" in the spring, kneeling on the ground to seek the first blades of grass that pricked through the soil, and bringing them into the house to study and wonder over. Better than a shopful of toys they were to me! Whence came their color? How did they draw their sweet, refreshing tint from the brown earth, or the limpid air, or the white light? Chemistry was not at hand to answer me, and all her wisdom would not have dispelled the wonder. Later, the little scarlet pimpernel charmed me. It seemed more than a flower; it was like a human thing. I knew it by its homely name of 'poor man's weather-glass.' It was so much wiser than I; for when the sky was yet without a cloud, softly it clasped its small red petals together, folding its golden heart in safety from the shower that was sure to come. How could it know so much?"

Whatever sorrows life brought to her, and they were many and of the heaviest, this exquisite enjoyment of nature, the tender love and care for every created thing within her reach, always stayed her heart. To see her lift a flower in her fingers, — fingers which gave one a sense of supporting everything which she touched,

expressive, too, of fineness in every fibre, although strong and worn with labor, — to see her handle these wonderful creatures which she worshiped, was something not to be forgotten. The lines of Keats,

> "Open afresh your rounds of starry folds,
> Ye ardent marigolds!"

were probably oftener flitting through her mind or from her lips than through the mind or from the lips of any since Keats wrote them. She remembered that he said he thought his "intensest pleasure in life had been to watch the growth of flowers," but she was sure he never felt their beauty more devoutly "than the little half-savage being who knelt, like a fire-worshiper, to watch the unfolding of those golden disks."

The time came at last, as it comes to every human being, for asking the reason of the faith that was in her. It was difficult for her to reply. Her heart had often questioned whether she believed, and what; and yet, as she has said, she could not keep her faith out of her poems if she would. We find the following passage in "Among the Isles of Shoals," which throws a light beyond that of her own lantern.

"When the boat was out late," she says, "in soft, moonless summer nights, I used to light a lantern, and, going down to the water's edge, take my station between the timbers of the slip, and, with the lantern at my feet, sit waiting in the darkness, quite content, knowing my little star was watched for, and that the safety of the boat depended in a great measure upon it. I felt so much a part of the Lord's universe, I was no more afraid of the dark than the waves or winds; but I was glad to hear at last the creaking of the mast and the rattling of the rowlocks as the boat approached."

"A part of the Lord's universe," — that Celia Thaxter always felt herself to be, and for many years she was impatient of other teaching than what nature brought to her. As life went on, and the mingled mysteries of human pain and grief were unfolded, she longed for a closer knowledge. At first she sought it everywhere, and patiently, save in or through the churches; with them she was long *im*patient. At last, after ardent search through the religious books and by means of the teachers of the Orient, the Bible was born anew for her, and the New Testament became a fresh source of life.

Nothing was ever "born anew" in Celia Thaxter which she did not strive to share with others. She could keep nothing but secrets to herself. Joys, experiences of every kind, sorrows and misfortunes, except when they could darken the lives of others, were all brought, open-handed and open-hearted, to those she loved. Her generosity knew no limits.

There is a description by her of the flood which swept over her being, and seemed to carry her away from the earth, when she once saw the great glory of the Lord in a rainbow at the island. She hid her face from the wonder; it was more than she could bear. "I felt then," she said, "how I longed to speak these things which made life so sweet, — to speak the wind, the cloud, the bird's flight, the sea's murmur, — and ever the wish grew;" and so it was she became, growing from and with this wish, a poet the world will remember. Dr. Holmes said once in conversation that he thought the value of a poet to the world was not so much the pleasure that this or that poem might give to certain readers, or even perchance to posterity, as the fact that a poet was known to be one who was sometimes rapt out of himself into

the region of the Divine; that the spirit had descended upon him and taught him what he should speak.'

This is especially true of Celia Thaxter, whose life was divorced from worldliness, while it was instinct with the keenest enjoyment of life and of God's world. She liked to read her poems aloud when people asked for them; and if there was ever a genuine reputation from doing a thing well, such a reputation was hers. From the first person who heard her the wish began to spread, until, summer after summer, in her parlor, listeners would gather, if she would promise to read to them. Night after night she has held her sway, with tears and smiles from her responsive little audiences, which seemed to gain new courage and light from what she gave them. Her unspeakably interesting nature was always betraying itself and shining out between the lines. Occasionally she yielded to the urgent claims brought to bear upon her by her friend Mrs. Johnson, of the Woman's Prison, and would go to read to the sad-eyed audience at Sherborn. Even those hearts dulled by wrong and misery awakened at the sound of her voice. It was not altogether

this or that verse or ballad that made the tears flow, or brought a laugh from her hearers: it was the deep sympathy which she carried in her heart and which poured out in her voice; a hope, too, for them, and for what they might yet become. She could not go frequently, — she was too deeply laden with responsibilities nearer home; but it was always a holiday when she was known to be coming, and a season of light-heartedness to Mrs. Johnson as well as to the prisoners.

It is a strange fallacy that a poet may not read his own verses well. Who beside the writer should comprehend every shade of meaning which made the cloud or sunshine of his poem? Mrs. Thaxter certainly read her own verse with a fullness of suggestion which no other reader could have given it, and her voice was sufficient, too, although not loud or striking, to fill and satisfy the ear of the listener. But at the risk of repetition we recall that it was her own generous, beautiful nature, unlike that of any other, which made her reading helpful to all who heard her. She speaks somewhere of the birds on her island as "so tame, knowing how well they are beloved, that they gather on

the window-sills, twittering and fluttering, gay and graceful, turning their heads this way and that, eying you askance without a trace of fear." And so it was with the human beings who came to know her. They were attracted, they came near, they flew under her protection, and were not disappointed of their rest.

LETTERS OF CELIA THAXTER

THE seclusion of Celia Laighton from the world during the early years of her life will sufficiently account for the absence of any letters during that period. The only record of her childhood is what she has given in her book "Among the Isles of Shoals."

No letters have been found earlier than 1856, when Mrs. Thaxter was little more than twenty years old. The very first are addressed to Mrs. Hoxie, and are more autobiographical than any others written at this period. They begin abruptly.

I'm[1] desperately afraid I didn't sufficiently express my gratitude to Mary for her thoughtful kindness in writing to me so soon after we had got to this place "where people want letters" (there never was a truer remark). You must thank her again, if you please, for me, and tell her I hope she got the sweet peas I sent, and that I shall write her by and by more

[1] To Elizabeth Curzon Hoxie. Appledore, May 25, 1856.

of a letter than the scrap of a note accompanying them.

I wonder Bob isn't at the head of every class in everything. How I should like to see him, and dear Nanny and Neddy! We were really dreadfully sorry to hear how near we were to seeing them that morning we left Newburyport, and yet missed it. I declare I would have given almost anything for a sight of their dear little bright faces. Karly is for sending the Golden Eagle right up the river for them to bring them over here, — that was his suggestion, — directly. Tell Nanny — dear, precious little girl — that Karly does lots of things to help me; and tell them both that Karly and "little Non" (as he calls himself and we call him now) never forget them, but talk about them every day. Baby still calls wistfully, "Nanny! Neddy!" and seems to wonder they don't come when he wants them so much. I wonder how many squares of patchwork Nan has made since I left the Mill. John goes up and down the piazza steps and runs off to where a calf is tied close by, and falls into a wild-rose bush and gets his fat legs full of briers, struggles up again, only to fall on a stone and make a black and blue spot on his knee, gets off that and falls into a raspberry bush, and so on indefinitely, while his

mother and father and grandmother, when they do notice him, burst into shouts of inextinguishable laughter, for he is the most ridiculous object ever beheld, just as round as an apple and broad as he is long, toddling and waddling and tumbling in every direction. He can say anything now, and it is too funny to hear him talk.

My eyes are almost shut from weariness and sleepiness, and I shall have to stop writing and send you this poor little stupid scrawl after all, dear Lizzy. But, dear, take the will for the deed; I have the heart to write you twenty pages and hundreds of loving words. Kiss the darling children for me. I inclose a piece of baby's dress for sweetest Nan to make a little square of. Give kindest love to John and mamma and Mary, and believe me ever most affectionately yours, CELIA.

How do George Curtis and Anna progress? I long to hear about them.

Oh,[1] these exemplary housekeepers, how much they have to do! I feel as if I were sinning against my conscience when I write a letter on any day but Sunday, because it is inevitable that

[1] To E. C. Hoxie. Newtonville, January 18, 1857.

I should neglect some important duty to do it, and I never do do it except in a case of vital importance. It is a good thing, after steady trying, to have your husband pronounce you "virtuous" when you are doing your best, but sometimes it 's a great bore being exemplary. But there is another reason I have n't written to you, and that is because I have been waiting to finish something I have been making for dearest little Nankins, and I wanted to send the bundle when I wrote; but I can't wait any longer, and I can only say about the bundle that I hope by some means to propel it in your direction sometime before next Saturday.

Tell Mary her letter was received a day or two ago, and was read with infinite applause and unbounded merriment. I don't know when we have enjoyed anything so much. Levi goes off into the tenderest reminiscences of the Mills, and thinks of you all collectively and then separately, and broods over the idea of seeing some of you. He keeps breaking out by fits and starts, "Don't you think Mrs. Curzon will come to Boston this winter?" and "Can't Lizzie be got up in the spring, don't you suppose?" and "When *will* Margie and Mary get along?"

You don't know what a steady old drudge I have grown to be, and I 'm happy as the day is

long, and the children are perfect "gardens of paradise," and Levi is beautiful and gentle and good and unselfish as mortal man can be. And we have splendid times. Such good evenings as we have! And they are so fascinating sometimes we don't break up the meeting till past eleven, never till after ten. We draw the table up to the roaring fire, and I take my work, and Levi reads to me; first he read "Aurora" (and you 're an abominable woman for not thinking it the beautifullest book that was ever written), then "Dred," which in spite of the little bird women, horrid little things, we enjoyed. Levi gave the negro talk with such gusto we had shouts of laughter over it. Next to "Dred" we read Dr. Kane's books, the two volumes of the Arctic expedition. Oh, how we did enjoy that! Full of beautiful pictures taken on the spot by Dr. Kane himself, which we looked at together and admired and commented upon and enjoyed as much as they could be enjoyed by anybody. Brave, splendid Dr. Kane! We watch the papers for every bit of news of him which floats to us from that far-off tropical Cuba where he has gone to recover, if he can, from the everlasting chill he got among the icebergs with the thermometer seventy-five degrees below zero! Now we are reading Ruskin's last vol-

ume of "Modern Painters," and I declare I can't tell what we have the best times over, for we sometimes lose ourselves in wonder and admiration at him, and then shout with unbounded mirth over his impatient sarcasm, his downrightness, if that 's an allowable word; and fall into a great feeling of reverence occasionally over him and say to each other how true are Margie's ideas of the highest art because she follows nature so nobly and faithfully, — that is high art according to him; very few people do it faithfully. You don't know how entirely happy we are to be together again, with both children; it seems as if we had found each other anew and never were so substantially happy before. The children keep so well it is almost alarming, not even having occasional colds, which I thought was the common lot of humanity. The scarlet fever is all around us in every direction too. Are n't we very happy to be able to hear Theodore Parker? Such preaching is of inestimable worth. The sermon I heard this afternoon was wonderful; such power and pathos in a human voice was wonderful. I don't think there was a person in the house who kept tearless eyes through that sermon. He described the rapture of a father when his first-born son is put into his arms, so exquisitely, so

truly, grew so enraptured himself in the description, so carried away by his own feeling, that he was transfigured. He looked a god standing with outspread arms before us all, instead of the stern, grave, middle-aged man that had walked up to the reading-desk an hour before. And yet he never had a child! How could he do that so inimitably? Was it so perfect from the very reason that the rapture is denied him? Oh, Lizzie, he does talk beautifully and wonderfully. He moves people to tears and to laughter; he carries all his audience along with him resistlessly; he makes them quail under the weight of their own sins, and shows them then where is strength and hope and comfort, and sends one away cheerful and feeling infinitely better than when one came. If you could only hear him describe "Miss Matilda Caroline who has ruined her constitution pulling a bell-rope!" It is too rich. I don't see what I have done that the Lord has given me so great a delight among other delights as hearing and seeing and knowing this man.

I'm afraid you'll think my letter very stupid, dear Lizzie. I was so glad to hear how comfortable you are in the dear little Mill. Levi thinks that a walk on the Artichoke would put a climax on his state of bliss. Beau-

tiful little river! How I should like to see it. Is Myra still with you? If she is, remember me to her, and do not tell her how I swear at her every day I wear the dress she made for me, for it is continually giving out in all directions, and the wrists have taken up their position just below my elbows, whence they stubbornly refuse to stir. Do give my very best budget of regards and remembrances and love to John, and kisses, ad libitum, to the children.

Ever your affectionate

CELIA.

To think of your[1] asking such a question as "Do I care about Charlotte Bronté"! As if I did not care everything I am capable of caring for anything! As if Levi and I had n't read her books with rapture, and had n't looked forward to the publishing of Mrs. Gaskell's book about her as one of the most interesting things that could happen; as if we did n't lament her loss to the world every year of our lives! Oh, Lizzie! I 'm ashamed that you know so little of your friends. We are not so happy as to see the "Tribune." We have seen no extracts, therefore. How nice they are making "Putnam's," are n't they? We have had one extract from

[1] To E. C. Hoxie. Newtonville, March 28, 1857

a letter of Bayard Taylor's, a spirited reindeer performance.

The T——s brought us home Guido's "Aurora," engraved by Raphael Morghen. You have seen the picture? Oh, so splendid as it is! Levi and I look at it by the half-hour together and find new beauties in it daily.

Bless the children, how did it happen they were sick? John and Karl have grand times out doors, and get dirtier than a whole dictionary can express. I do my own washing now, and think of you all the time, and get tired to death and half dead, but unlike you I fret and worry when things go wrong, and scold and fuss. Oh, for your patience! How mine takes wing and leaves me forlorn and ugly and horrid! How it seems as if the weary load of things one makes out to do, with such expenditure of strength and nerves and patience, goes for naught, no manner of notice ever taken of all that is accomplished; but if anything is left undone, ah me, the hue and cry that is raised! I don't think you can have any conception what an infinite source of pleasure and consolation under all trials Browning's "Men and Women" are to me. There is something satisfactory to every mood of the human mind in that book. Many of the shorter pieces I know

by heart, and you would laugh to hear the children, who catch everything from me, talking about

> "The patching house-leek's head of blossom winks
> Through the chinks,"

and so forth. Also you'd be killed to hear John roar out "The splendor falls on castle walls," etc., from beginning to end, and also "Half a league," etc.

My heart is full of you all, this delicious spring weather. Tell Mamy I think the Whittier poem is one of the sweetest and freshest I ever saw of his. Give my best love to dearest mamma and all. How kind you are to write, dear Lizzie. Do beg them to write. Ever most affectionately your poor little helpless foolish CELIA.

If you[1] and I, Lizzie, only had a small portion of the time elegant young ladies fritter away, would n't we do wonders and would n't we be happy and make much of it? Heigho! I never shall have any, I'm afraid. Is n't Sally with you, or anybody? Are you any worse for the hard times? We're not; not having anything to lose, we've lost nothing, and having no risks run, and nothing to do

[1] To E. C. Hoxie Newtonville, Sunday, November 22d

with anybody or anything in the way of getting a living, we 're no better nor worse than before the panic. Now the cold weather is come, I have a washerwoman, which is a relief, but the ironing is hideous, ungrateful that I am! You have ever so much harder time than I, dear Lizzie. I do wish I could help you, and that we lived together. We 've had no sickness to speak of, yet, and I humbly trust in Providence we may get through the winter without any very horrid time. John is splendidly well and comfortable and comforting and delightful. Karly, I think, is getting less nervous than he was. I try very hard to let him alone, but he is so mischievous that I can't help visiting him with small thunder occasionally, also spanks. Poor little spud! he is very loving and sometimes very sweet and gentle. Yesterday John came in from outdoors, red as a poppy and bellowing lustily. "Mamma, that *naughty* biddy won't let me take hold of her tail!" and he howled with rage and I screamed with laughter. The biddies are fine. The other day we killed the old rooster, the magnificent sultan of the flock, and boiled him in a floured bag, and he was delicious. We had company to dinner, a strange young lady from Boston, and John kept saying "Please

Mamma, give me another piece of cockerel!" to my immense private amusement. Since his majesty was decapitated all the other princes have nearly fought each other dead, and great will be the slaughter among them presently, by their human (or rather inhuman) keepers. Levi and I nearly expire over the performances of hens, and think of you often in connection. Oh, Lizzie, do you have races with things to get them eaten up? What with trying to eat up the quinces, apples, squashes, pumpkins, etc., as fast as they get a leaning towards decay, we are obliged to eat very little else; everybody in the neighborhood is so rich there 's nobody to give them away to. I think Lamartine would be perfectly satisfied with our present diet. I 've just got rid of the last tomatoes, to my great satisfaction. I 've been lugging them about the county to my various friends for the last month, in the vain endeavor to get rid of them, and now there 's only one *mess* left.

Thanks for the Murray. Next winter we shall regularly set about ——'s "education," and a precious time we shall have of it.

These early letters show Mrs. Thaxter to be the child she really was, despite her married estate. Much is omitted, but a frequent

impatience with the conditions of life in such contrast to her unfettered youth is expressed in her own downright and amusing fashion.

But the Lord knows, it 's no use borrowing trouble. Little Celia is — non est. I sigh for her; the children sigh in chorus. If we could unite our sighs with yours for the same cause, what a breeze we should raise! The boys are in a kind of tremor of expectation of St. Nicholas and his treasures. I want to hang up my stocking too, dreadfully; except that I feel it in my bones St. Nicholas would overlook it, I certainly should. Perhaps a certain friend will remember me, and make me a present of some cloth to make Levi six shirts, as she did once before, you know!

I devour books whenever I get a chance, read Dante and peel squash, à la Elizabeth Bronté, have got through Hell and Purgatory and am coming to Heaven now, thank fortune! We have just been reading "Quits;" 't would do well enough if one had the time for it. White Lies!! Don't mention 'em!!! If the agony is n't piled sky-high I 'd like to know where you 'll find it. Imagine yourself Josephine, and Raynal's face coming over that screen! Good Lord be with us! what a situation, and the baby in her lap, "rustle-thump, rustle-thump"!

How capital that is! Levi will send you "The Box Tunnel" and "Propria Quæ Maribus," I suppose; if he does n't I will. He sends love and says he shall write speedily, and he wishes you were here. Dear Lizzie, do come and make us a good long visit, can't you? and rest a little, poor little woman. I mean come and stay with *me*, and not go tearing round Boston and Brookline and Lord knows where. Bring Nan, or all; they would have fine times together. Does n't Bob have a vacation? Do come, I beg and entreat, any time; we should only be too enchanted to see you, and the children would be in ecstasies to see yours. Karly sings,

> "The cars are ready and the horses are waiting,
> And I 'm *bound* to see my *own* Nanny Hoxie,
> I 'm bound to see my *own* Nanny Hoxie,"

and so on, ad libitum. His own idea; and it 's killing to hear the emphasis of the young man.

I[1] have been enduring the severest stabs of conscience for the longest while, thinking of you almost every day and wishing with all my heart to write to you. First I had a siege of sickness, then a Gulf Stream of company.

[1] To E. C. Hoxie. Newton, January 30, 1859, Sunday Morning.

Sunday night. I thought I should have so much time to-day to write and do all sorts of things, yet this is all I have been able to accomplish! Now baby and his brothers are in bed and asleep and I feel like being in bed and asleep too, too sleepy to have any ideas left. How charmingly Nanny's letter was written! Tell her I shall answer it the very first chance I get. She may look forward to a very big letter all to herself very soon. I wish I could see her. I know how beautiful it always is at the mill, how beautiful in every way. Somehow "crude" is the word that expresses this place. It seems to me at the world's end — lonely, un-get-at-able, uninteresting, not one beloved, friendly face within reach, no children for ours to play with; but it might be a great deal worse too. I don't wish to be ungrateful, the Lord preserve us! With such a baby too! Lizzie, I 'm fairly in raptures with this baby; never was in raptures before, always thought small of my own goslings, but this baby smiles the very heart out of my breast. He is too angelical for words to give any idea of him. Is n't it funny that he should be such a jolly, sweet little pleasant creature when his mamma was always so glum before he came? And he has n't a name! Levi wants to call him David, but I

despise it, and Roland, which is the only other name he will listen to, is n't exactly satisfactory either. Dear me! if he had only been a girl there would have been no difficulty in naming him.

I suppose you have seen by the papers that Mr. Weiss has resigned his ministry at New Bedford; he will probably take his family and come and live on his brains somewhere in this vicinity. He will not preach again, at least he does n't mean to at present.

Tell Margie, mother has half promised to come this February and see us, and that we are going to the island in March, for in the summer Levi proposes wandering off to Mount Desert or some such preposterous place. There can never be such a charming sea place as the islands; how can anybody want to go further? I do not, most certainly.

Dearest Lizzie, I beg your pardon for trying to write to you when I 'm so infinitely stupid. I wish I could shake my own family off for a week and come and help you wash dishes and mend stockings and admire Neddy. Tell Margie we 've got a new set of silver, New Year's present from grandmother, very solid, very heavy, very handsome, very horrid to take care of, have to keep drumming up the girls about

it and going round with a nasty bit of wash-leather rubbing here and rubbing there. Give me my iron jug and iron spoon, say I with Mr. Thoreau. Susy Dabney gave Karly "Wee Willie Winkie's" nursery songs, and it is so charming.

We take the semi-weekly "Tribune" and think of you. Isn't "Minister's Wooing" killing good?

My darling little Nan:[1] — Would you like, some day when you have a little time, to go along the river bank with a piece of paper or something, and gather me some harebell seeds? If you could and would, I should be so very glad, for I want to get the dear lovely bells to grow here by our river as well as by yours, and I am afraid the roots I brought all the way from Newburyport and set out here, will not live. If I had some seeds I would plant them this fall and I think they 'd come up in the spring.

How is mamma and dear little Anson, and papa and all? How I should like to see you all. We have got a dear little baby named Richard, and a little girl named May Dana, here, and their mother, and the baby was born

[1] To Nanny Hoxie.

in Utah, and rode all the way from the Rocky Mountains to Massachusetts in an ambulance across the plains when he was five months old, in August. One night there was a dreadful storm (they had to make a tent-house for themselves every night), and the rain and wind were so frightful they tore down the tent-house, and drenched all their clothes, and all their beds, and everything they had, and then they were exposed to the merciless storm till morning, not a dry rag to put on, or a dry place to put baby, and the big hailstones beating them till he cried with the pain of them. Was n't that cruel? Think of little Anson exposed to such a dreadful storm! But it was beautiful, pleasant days traveling, for all the ground was covered with such lovely flowers, verbenas, petunias, gladiolus, mats of crimson and scarlet portulaca, and all sorts of lovely garden flowers growing wild, and wonderful kinds of cactus, etc. But poor little Richard and May like wooden houses better than tents, and living here with their little cousins better than being rattled along by the trains of mules and troops of men day after day, through the sunshine and rain. Kiss dear baby for me, and darling precious mamma, and give my love to Mamey and Gamma and papa and the

boys, and do write to me, Nan darling, and send me the seeds if you can.

Ever affectionately your little Auntie

CELIA.

I[1] have been overrun with things and people, no end of people, who seem to think this nook of Newtonville particularly delightful; but you Curzon people know what it is to have a river and a boat and live in the country, and though we don't pretend to the attractions and allurements which the Mills possess, still we have enough to attract quite a swarm of summer flies! I beg their pardon, I 'm very fond of them all, but I realize more and more, the longer I live, what a good thing it is to have a little time to one's self, if only for the purpose of writing to one's friends. And how are you, dear Lizzy? I wish I could know; you were sick, Margie told me, and I was so sorry to hear it, — but that was months ago. I hope you are well now and feel strong, but alas for the strength of feminine humanity such days as these! Such heat! Good heavens, you can boil eggs and roast chickens anywhere in this house, any time in the day. I told Marie yesterday that it was absurdly superfluous putting

[1] To E. C. Hoxie. Newton, July 10, 1861.

her flatirons on the range; she need only set them on the window-sill and she 'd be able to iron her starched clothes with them in the space of five minutes. To think of coming from the island in such weather! where I wore the thickest Valencia, a perfect horse-blanket of a gown, all the time! Can't wear anything here; have to exist without clothes, and it 's hard enough keeping body and soul together at that. I had such a good time at the island, and when I came home Levi met me in Boston and triumphantly informed me I could go home by land or water, as he had rowed in from Newtonville with George Folsom, and Karl and John, and Henry Weiss. Well, I had started from the island between four and five o'clock and floated on the unruffled bosom of the broad Atlantic until between nine and ten, with Lony asleep on my knees, and felt as if I had had quite enough water for one day; but I perceived my spouse would particularly like to have me be rowed home, so I embarked at Cambridge bridge, a cushion behind me, an umbrella (Sairey Gamp's own) over me, a box of strawberries in my lap, and four admiring masculine bipeds opposite me. I don't include Lony; he had been to the island with me and only "set store by me" in a general way. Had I not

been such a travel-stained Cleopatra, and so tired and hot, I should have had a sparkling and vivacious time; but I had a very lovely if not a high time, and enjoyed it thoroughly. We got home a little after sunset, George and Levi rowing by turns, and stopped on the way to leave a basket of fish at the Robbins's, who live conveniently on the bank of the river. We had on board two baskets which accompanied me from the island as baggage, — champagne baskets, — containing heaps of beautiful loaves of bread, and six big lumps of fresh butter, a great huge plank of sponge cake and a huge loaf of plum, a great many corned mackerel, splendid salt fish, and two lovely, indeed I may say, heavenly, jars of fresh potted lobster. So we feasted. To be sure the corned mackerel were n't of much use in their raw state, but the gentlemen "let in" to the other edibles in a way that did credit to their appetites; at least Levi did. George is n't in the habit of eating, I believe, anything.

At present we subsist principally on ice cream, Levi having invested in a freezer which really and truly freezes in five minutes, and will freeze in four, a small quantity. And to tell you the truth, the reason I am writing to you to-night is because I am afraid to go to bed

after a big plateful (flavored with strawberries freshly mashed up in it and sherry wine, a jolly mixture I assure you!). We have been out on the river till nearly ten, rowing Mr. and Mrs. Edward Bangs, and there was moonlight and starlight and firefly light and lightning, and it was lovely on the water, and Mrs. Bangs is such a raving beauty that one can't look at her enough.

Thursday evening. Of all the nasty-looking letters I ever did write I think this is the worst! But it 's all on account of a new india-rubber pen, which is in such a hurry to write that it lets the ink all down in a lump, all of a sudden; but I need n't tell you that, for you know what exquisitely neat letters I 'm in the habit of writing to my friends, from experience. Seriously, I think Aspasia would consider me beneath her notice, because she says a woman is n't worth sixpence who does n't make her letters exquisite, does n't take pains to have her handwriting neat.

Do Bob and Ned drill? Karl and John do nothing but fight; they live on it all the time; it 's their bread and meat and drink. I suppose it 's a natural instinct — to prepare them for the war. They roared in chorus, all three, under the windows at supper-time to-night, and on going out I found Karl and Roland (K. aged nine, R.

aged three) beating each other with barrel staves. Highly agreeable and salutary performance, but disagreeably noisy with "company" on hand.

We find an early note written to her publisher, Mr. Fields, at about this period, — the first hint of her literary life: —

I thank you[1] very much for the kind things you have said about my little poem, and am grateful for the trouble you took in looking it over and making suggestions. I am sorry I could not act upon them all. I am not good at making alterations. The only merit of my small productions lies in their straightforward simplicity, and when that bloom is rubbed off by the effort to better them, they lose what little good they originally possessed.

I'm afraid you will not think the unconscious quotation from the "Ancient Mariner" remedied by the mere transposition of words, but I cannot alter it satisfactorily and say what I wish. If the first and fifth verses do not seem to you too objectionable, pray let them pass.

I'm sorry its name is not so felicitous as "Land-Locked," which Mr. Lowell christened.

Pray pardon me for trespassing on your valuable time, and believe me

Gratefully yours, C. THAXTER.

[1] To James T. Fields. Newtonville, September 23, 1861.

Thanks for your[1] note. I am just as sorry as I can be, that you can't come. "April, 1863"? Why, by that time, every man, woman, and child will be drained out of the veins of the nation and lost in the war! Do you *expect* to be alive in April, 1863? I don't. Very faintly the spent wave of terrible news reached us here in this remote nook, till yesterday. A note from Mr. Weiss brought it all horribly in sight. What carnage, what endless suffering! It is so hard to realize, when the delicious days go by, one after one, so still and full of peace. I never saw more perfect days, full of all loveliness; the islands never seemed so charming before!

I think you are entirely right about my rhymes. I should hardly have sent them, but you had surprised me by liking other things, and it seemed possible you might these. I believe, I am *afraid*, I never can put my heart into anything that does n't belong to the sea.

We were sorry you[2] could not come on Saturday. It was just the sort of day for an expedition,— cool and clear. Mr. Thaxter and Mr. Folsom took a boat above the Upper Falls and

[1] To James T. Fields. Appledore, September 4, 1862.
[2] To Annie Fields. Newtonville.

were gone till sunset, and I took Miss Mary Folsom and rowed to Waltham. We contrived to spend two long hours deliciously among the lily pads and spikes of purple pickerel-weed, explored a brook and loaded our boat with flowers; had altogether a charming time.

So let us have next Saturday if it is possible, will you not? Let us know if there is any hope of your coming, — perhaps Mr. Weiss may be able to come too. We have had such a sparkling and enchanting Sunday! He preached like one possessed, with a spirit of good, and uttered aloud the awful word Slavery, and the people were still as death. The church was full to overflowing.

The carryall would hardly hold the heaps of flowers; the scarlet poppies waved out of the windows; the sweet peas fell to the floor for want of hands and laps to hold them! Ah, these are splendid days!

The[1] leaves are falling, falling, dry and sere after the sudden frost, and it looks pinched and cold out of doors, and the wind whistles, and we cluster about the fire at nightfall and tell stories to the children as if it were midwinter. I cannot tell you how I dread the cold! Were

[1] To Annie Fields. October 23, 1862.

I but a stork or a swallow! To have the fields locked up hard and fast, and the snow, blank, stark, stiff, glaring, spread over all, months and months! It takes all my philosophy to stand it and keep my equilibrium. I long for the light and life, and ever shifting color, and ever delicious sound of the faithful old sea more in the winter than in the summer. No frost or snow can extinguish it.

My Dear Friend:[1] — I 'm sorry I 've as yet no prosaic manuscripts for you, but I pray you patience for a little longer. Meanwhile here are some verses which have been evolved among the pots and kettles, to which you 're welcome, if they 're good enough for you. Verses can grow when prose can't,

"While greasy Joan doth keel the pot"!

The rhymes in my head are all that keep me alive, I do believe, lifting me in a half unconscious condition over the ashes heap, so that I don't half realize how dry and dusty it is! I have had no servant at all for a whole week, by a combination of hideous circumstances. I wish you 'd tell A. that I have had infinite satisfaction and refreshment out of her tickets already, and forget all weariness and perplexity

[1] To James T. Fields. Newtonville, October 25.

on the crest of a breaker of earthly bliss while Emerson discourses.

So you[1] were one of the "Tenters," as the Star Islanders call the dwellers in canvas houses. And Bayard Taylor? And who was the fair neighboring lady? and was there really one? And was it Annie? What a pleasant time it must have been! How I wish I could have peeped at you from without, and heard the voice that read! But I share with the world the next best thing, "the Tent in type," and am duly grateful.

Thanks, also, for your note of acceptance. Here is the snow again, just as we were fairly rid of the ice-packs! It was so blissful to see the color of the brown fields and pastures, like a tawny lion's skin spread down, and now they are all stark, white, motionless, mute, dead, in their shroud again. I hate the snow with a delightful fervor; it just means death to me, and nothing more or less. I sympathize with the cats and hens, who step across it, lifting up their feet with intense discomfort and disapprobation, and never walk on it if I can help it. But it won't last long.

[1] To James T. Fields. Newtonville, February 20.

When[1] the snow blows here we are as much cut off from humanity as if we lived in an iceberg, afloat in the Polar seas. Never mind, stout hearts and firm wills conquer anything in this world, and as you say, we don't need soft skies to make friendship a joy to us. What a heavenly thing it is; "world without end," truly. I grow warm thinking of it, and should glow at the thought if all the glaciers of the Alps were heaped over me! Such friends God has given me in this little life of mine!

Aren't you[2] glad to begin to perceive a prospect of spring? it must be so splendid with you. The chicks have brought in the most splendid blossoming maple boughs, smelling like honey, and cowslips and willow blossoms and alder catkins and so on, but we 've found no bloodroot or hepaticas yet. You have the Mayflower growing near you, haven't you? How I should like to gather it! Roland reverently gathered a skunk cabbage flower and carried up to school in West Newton, to the teacher of botany in whose class he was a pupil, and she hove it out of the window with speed, said she never saw it before and never wished to see it

[1] To Annie Fields. Newtonville.
[2] To E. C. Hoxie. Newtonville, April 24.

again, never even heard of it and did n't want to! There 's wisdom for you! As if it did n't have its place in creation and was n't curious and interesting in spite of its smell! Imagine Levi's extreme disgust! A scholar who brought two dabby azalea blossoms from a greenhouse was welcomed with smiles. Such is life. I tied bones to the trees this winter in humble imitation of you, and the birds came round in flocks, to my intense satisfaction. The boys and Levi have guns and go murdering round the country in the name of science till my heart is broken into shreds. They are horribly learned, but that does n't compensate for one little life destroyed, in my woman's way of viewing it.

DEAR FRIEND:[1] — I have copied my ballad for your dissecting knife, very hastily, but I hope it is legible.

Please say to A., with much love, that we had a most charming time last night. It was a real delight to see Mr. Dickens and to have one's ideal of an individual so completely realized.

[1] To James T. Fields. Boston, Monday Morning, January 6, 1867.

This morning[1] the fishing boats, flying out wing-and-wing before the north wind, brought a mail, and again I am grateful to hear that all are well at home. This afternoon Cedric took a schooner and bounded away over the long waves to Portsmouth, the wind being north-east, so we hope for another mail to-morrow. This day the weather has relented, and over our bleak loneliness a softer sky has stooped, with loosely blown light clouds almost summerlike. To-night at sunset it was dead calm and we climbed the hill and sat by the smaller cairn with all the loveliness spread out before us; a soft crimson sunset intensely vivid over the dark coast and the whole sea reflecting it, in rosy streaks near, and afar off a long red trail in the water. The tide brimmed every cove; a little ice-bird swam in, shook himself; and landed on a point close by for his supper of blue mussels, diving down and coming up again with so much life and vigor that it was entertaining to watch him. When we came down by Babb's Cove the water came in in such a beautiful curve that I was enchanted. First the line was marked in snow, then a few feet below it was drawn accurately in black sea-

[1] To John G. Whittier. The Shoals, Sunday, February 16, 1868.

weed, then below that came the living water itself, the "wan water," the melodious water!

Oscar and I have just been leaning out of the window watching the planet Venus, bright as a young moon, throwing "into the ocean faint and far" "the trail of its golden splendor," and listening to the rote which bodes a storm, though the water is like glass. This sound we knew came from the bight of Little Island, as we tried to disentangle the separate sounds wound into one hollow roar; that from Cannon Point, where now and then a sleepy breaker rolled; but the body of sound came from the east and just like a great shell held to your ear it seemed. It does have the most wonderful effect on the human imagination; long before I read "The Lotos Eaters," listening to it I felt as if all things were dreams and shadows. It makes one careless of life; it lulls alike all joy and pain; it dulls our senses till we are ready to cry indeed, "there is no joy but calm"! The northeast wind has swept out of the upper cove the thick crust of ice, and left it clear. Dear friend, you would hardly know the place! This long piazza, up and down which Youth and Romance were wont to meander through the summer evenings, is filled with snow from one end to the other and trav-

ersed occasionally by the cows and sheep; the little garden which kept me in roses so long last summer, and whose golden and flame-colored flowers seemed trying to outblaze the sun, is but a heap of snow and desolation. How the poppies nodded their scarlet heads between the rails, and how sweet was the perfume from the mignonette, and how good you were to let me put flowers in your buttonhole! Dear me, what a crowd of reminiscences! Now, in front of the house, the poor Pilgrim (the largest yacht, which went ashore last fall and nearly stove to pieces) is hauled up for repairs, and to shelter her against the weather is draped with a melancholy gray old sail, a ragged piece of canvas that flaps in every breeze; not a boat on the moorings where the tiny fleet tossed like eggshells; and the landing where so many tender greetings passed is torn plank from plank and flung to the right and the left with a vengeance! Every year it is torn away and has to be rebuilt.

Tuesday, 18th. The storm has come and gone and left us powdered with fresh snow, but otherwise none the worse for it. I have sewed so steadily on gowns and caps and feminine paraphernalia that I richly deserved the fit of neuralgia in my head and eyes that made

me lose a whole day. I wish I were n't in the habit of going at everything with such a fury! I had a dear, long, lovely letter from Lucy Larcom. I do think she is a heavenly body! a true woman.

It is quite moderate to-day, lovely vanishing greens and blues and violets in among the tossing waves; a kinder sky, clear blue and soft. We hung the parrot out at the door and she imitated the whole flock of sheep and the cows and ducks and hens gathered within her ken, and ordered the horse about imperatively. She likes to be out in the sun, but when she grew tired she called me, "Celia! Celia!" till we took her in. Then she said "God love that girl!" as she hears Oscar say. She is too weird for this world! How you must miss Charlie! This bird is worth half a dozen people for entertainment. She flew away, while mother was gone last autumn, over to Star, and the islanders, taking her for a hawk, were about to shoot her, when she called loud and clear, "Cedric!" and just saved herself. I really think she was glad to see me. I 'm sure I was glad to see her!

February is vanishing fast. How soon the alders and willows will blossom! Do you know the thermometer has n't been below zero here

once this winter? But oh, the blustering and incorrigible winds! the storms, the snow, the blackness and bleakness of things!

This morning we woke to a dreary sifting of snow, but it cleared off early and the ragged scud went flying east, leaving a stainless blue clean swept by the southwest wind. Whiter than snow the coasters have crossed and recrossed our little space of heaven-colored sea to the east the whole day long. At noon there came a knock at the door, which I opened, and behold a fossil! a mummy! in other words an ancient Star Islander carrying a pail to get some milk for some sick woman. Anything so grizzled and overgrown with the moss of ages I never beheld! I placed a chair for him and mother said, "Do you know who it is?" "Ya'as," he said, "I know Mr. Thaxter's wife," but I did n't know him. They call him "Shothead," but his real name is Randall, as everybody's is who is n't Caswell. (Well, that *is* a wonderful sentence!) What the original color of the creature was we could not guess. I fancy he never fell overboard or was caught in a shower, and any other application of water I doubt if he ever tried. But he had a sweet expression in his old blue eyes, a kind of childish look, as he retailed the news from Star. I

asked him how they got on with Mr. Blank, the minister. He laughed a laugh of scorn. "Blank!" said he, "he ain't no good to nobody, no Doctor, no minister, no schoolmaster nuther. He took the five hundred dollars he got from the gentlemen over here last summer to repair the meeting-house, and has been up to Concord a spending on 't all winter!" It seems that he put in two windows for the "meeting-house" and that 's all. I 'm rather glad he did n't pull the old house to pieces, for the beams in it were rescued from the wreck of a Spanish ship as long ago as the oldest inhabitant can remember. The husband of the sick woman, who borrowed the Lone Star to go for the doctor, came over, — a stalwart fellow in the prime of life, thickset, well-made, with most beautiful large clear hazel eyes, a Nova Scotian, settled many a year at Star. He was so grateful for the boat! He brought over a whole dory load of fresh fish.

I had a splendid mail to-day, five letters, some very unexpected epistles, but I did not hear from you, therefore I was a little bit disappointed, being a woman and necessarily unreasonable. My spouse writes, "Katy [that is our Hibernian] does bravely" and "I shall not expect you yet." Is n't he good? Mother

says, "A few days longer; you know you 'll never have another mother and I shall not be here long," so I linger and linger, but must soon go, some time next week. I wish I were n't going to set foot off the island till next December! L. says he went to a ball unto which we were invited after I came away, the most prodigious affair of the kind ever given in Boston; the flowers alone cost fifteen hundred dollars, with Crete crying out to us, and the freedmen suffering, and the poor children in the streets of Boston barefoot and squalid!

Thursday morning. A really beautiful day; the coast has really got its feet in the water at last! Po Hill is no longer hanging between heaven and earth, like Mahomet's coffin, but has settled down like a decorous hill, behind Boar's Head, which stands out like a fort of snow in the morning light. Everything smiles and dances and sings for joy, and oh, to be a great gull floating aloft in the pure air!

You know, my dear Anson,[1] how much hasty pudding must be made in a family of growing boys, and how many vile old trousers and shirts and duds have to be darned in more senses than one, by the mother of a family. So I hope

[1] To Anson Hoxie. Newtonville, June 17, 1868.

you 'll be charitable, for I 've been loving you just as much all the time as if I had written a volume. Well, how do you do, this beautiful weather, you dear thing? Is n't it beautiful to have real hot summer days at last? How are all the gold robins and sparrows and catbirds and chickadees and woodpeckers and bluebirds and blackbirds and kingbirds and hummingbirds and things? Has the gold robin hatched her brood? Did she take the black horsehair, after all? Don't you think, we had a wind that was like the hurricane of the desert, the other day, hot and strong and long. A little chipping-sparrow had built her dainty nest in the cherry-tree outside my western chamber window, within reach of my hand, and as I sat there sewing I could watch her going and coming, and it was more lovely than tongue can tell. Well, this preposterous gale blew and blew and blew till the cows came home, and blew all night besides, as if its only earthly aim and object was to destroy every living thing in its way. It blew the dear little nest with its pretty blue eggs clean away out of sight; we found the remains in the hedge next day. And a dear purple finch's nest and eggs shared the same fate; the finches had built in a little cedar by the fence. I was so sorry!

Lots of nests were blown away all about. I hope gold robin held fast to the elm-tree down at Gammer's, if that senseless wind went roaring and raving down to Newburyport, as I suppose it did. Did the yellow bird build in the currant bushes? I 'm *so anxious* to know! When I went over to Amesbury that day I left you, a ruby-throated humming-bird was fluttering among Mr. Whittier's pear-trees all day. I wondered if he were the same one you and mamma and I watched that heavenly afternoon before, when we sat by the pleasant open window with the daffys underneath and the birds going and coming. Oh, I must tell you, that the chip-sparrow whose nest blew away built again in an elm-tree the other side of the house. Mr. Thaxter and Lony have been gone three days, and I milk the cow and she is tied to an apple-tree, and what do you think she does? She 's as frisky as a kitten, so all the time I 'm milking she goes round and round the tree and I after her, and it 's a spectacle enough to kill the cats, it 's so ridiculous. I suppose Margie is at the Mills by this time, and what good times you must have with the children! I gave lovely "little black Gammer" to Margie to carry back to your dearest of dear mammas. I hope she got it safely. Please tell her how

much obliged to her I am. Tell her I 've just got through wrestling with the dragon of house-cleaning and have succeeded in felling him to the earth, whereat my soul rejoices with an exceeding great joy. You can also inform her privately that I love her to distraction.

Did you get two magazines I sent you? Lony was much pleased with his marble and his bluebirds, which you sent, and thanks you much.

Did you[1] know Karl and I are moored here for seven months? Such is the remarkable fact, and Levi, Lony, and John are gone down to Jacksonville, or rather to the state of Florida generally and promiscuously, with powder and shot by the ton, and arsenic and plaster ditto, and camp-kettle and frying-pan and coffee-pot and provisions and rubber blankets and a tent, and a boat, and three guns, and a darkey to be obtained upon arriving at Jacksonville, and heaven only knows what besides. They are to steam down to Enterprise and then take their boat on to the lakes at the end of the St. John's River, and then row back in their boat, shooting all the crocodiles, parrakeets, mocking-birds, herons, flamingoes, white ibises and

[1] To E. C. Hoxie. Appledore, March 7, 1869.

every other creature, feathered or otherwise, that chances to fall in their way, until they stop in St. Augustine, and then return (going to see Bob on their way, if possible) sometime in May and stop here for a while to examine the windfall of birds killed by the lighthouse in the spring, and then they are to pursue their way up north, to Nova Scotia or the coast of Labrador, still to pursue the unwary sea fowl and cure the skin thereof and bring it as a tribute to the feet of Science! Meanwhile Karl and I remain here, moored for seven months. Our house is let and we 're houseless and homeless. When the Mayflower is in blossom I purpose skimming across the water and seeking you on one side and friend Whittier on the other side of the broad and meandering Merrimac, and making a flying call on you both. You might think I should have plenty of time, but you don't know how busy I am obliged to be, and as for pen and ink I 'm free to confess I hate the sight of it. Living on a desolate island is the busiest life! And as for the piles of sewing I 've got to do for myself, and the caps and gowns I 've got to make up for my mammy and the linen for house, it 's enough to make the spirit of mortal quail before it.

I[1] saw the tiger when William Hunt first sketched it, pinned up against the parlor wall, which was like a wondrous scrapbook, full of graceful and powerful bits of drawing and all sorts of odds and ends that nobody else would think of perpetuating. You saw the cactus flowers? He showed me the thick charcoal stump with which he drew these marvelous white blooms, so fresh, crisp, delicate, so living! Ah, he has the immortal spark if ever mortal had it! I never saw anything like the pathos he puts into human faces, — anything on canvas, I mean.

I 've thought of you tossing on the "wind-obeying deep" this last fortnight, and of —— as profoundly miserable. I remember how he shuddered at the thought of the sea. You must have arrived by this. Well! Does

> "The chaffinch sing on the orchard bough
> In England now" ?

and do you hear the wise thrush that sings each song twice over

> "Lest you should think he never could recapture
> The first fine careless rapture" ?

If you don't hear the thrush perhaps you 'll see the man who wrote about him, which will

[1] To Annie Fields. Appledore, Isles of Shoals, May 4 1869.

perhaps be better. That is another man with all his wits about him, "duly alive and aware." What vitality in all his words, what splendid power! After all, there is no one quite so satisfying to the human mind, and no one ever wearies of his worthiest speech any more than of Shakespeare's. . . .

Miss Shepard, who has lived in Salem all her days and knows the Hawthorne people well, says it was Mall Street and not Oliver in which he wrote the "Scarlet Letter." It seems the poem Hawthorne liked best among all the shorter pieces of modern writers was "The Grave," written by the authoress of "Paul Ferroll." Do you know the poem? Miss Shepard has sent to Miss Hawthorne to obtain it for me, and if you have n't it, if Miss H. (who is an uncertain and eccentric body) sends it to me, I will gladly give it to you. He thought it the most powerful thing in modern poetry. I never heard of it.

I wonder if you[1] care to know how the great Beethoven looked! Even if you don't, I think the picture is interesting as a fine type of humanity, and I crave permission to add it to your collection of photographs. How strange

[1] To John G. Whittier

it is that the greatest musician the world has ever seen should have been deaf to his own marvelous work and shut out from *all* sounds! Does n't he look like a splendid old German lion, with a northeast hurricane in his hair! I have n't words to tell you how I admire him and his uplifting music.

I had such a happy time at Amesbury! And I thank you with all my heart.

Your[1] letter came this morning and I can't tell you how sad it made me. I wish I knew what could be done, wish we had some plan of our own, wish we could join forces and do something, and Levi does so most heartily; but we have no plans even for the next weeks just ahead, only that he must get away as quickly as he can. I don't see but we have got to become a kind of human shuttlecocks and battledores, for Levi must go south in the winter and fly north in the summer, from rheumatism in winter and from fever and ague in summer. He has been slowly gaining strength, but is far from well, and this morning began with another threatening of rheumatism which troubles me and makes me feel very anxious to have

[1] To E. C. Hoxie. Newtonville, January 24, 1870.

him off. He and Lony are to go together, they don't know where, perhaps St. Augustine. Did I tell you John is to live with the Folsoms in Dedham, and Karl and I go to the island at present at least? Levi means to come home in May, or just as soon as it is warm enough. Then heaven knows where he will go or what we shall do, but something will have to be arranged for next winter. "Come home" I say, — there won't be any more home, which makes me feel forlorn.

What a charming letter is this of yours[1] about Mrs. Gold Robin and the blazing Pyrus full of humming-birds! How glad I am Anson likes his magazine, dear, charming little fellow that he is! If I live to be ten thousand years old I never shall forget his sudden appearance before me as I sat in the cars, bound for Amesbury; the fascination of his half shy, half uncertain attitude, his little slender figure, his bright head and enchanting smile. He is among the sweetest of the children that I know, and I am glad to remind him pleasantly of me.

While you were writing last Sunday what a lovely day it was, to be sure! I was scribbling by this heavenly western window, for the sound

[1] To E. C. Hoxie. Appledore, May 19, 1870.

of the ebbing tide was too delicious. I think George Curtis's lines are most lovely. Down they go into my extract book! Thank you for sending them.

We[1] have been here a week, Karl and I, but such things have happened I feel as if it were years. You know, I suppose, from the newspapers, of the horrid murder at Smutty-nose. Those dear, lovely Norwegian people had a settlement over there; there was John Hontvet and his wife Marie, and Karen Christiansen, Marie's sister, and Ivan Christiansen her brother, and Anethe his wife; the two had been married but a year and only came from Norway last fall. Anethe, everybody says, was a regular fair beauty, young and strong, with splendid thick yellow hair, so long she could sit on it. Both husbands, John and Ivan, were devotedly fond of their wives, and their little home was so bright and happy and neat and delightful they never ceased congratulating themselves upon having found such a place to live in. Louis Wagner, the Prussian devil who murdered them, had lived with them all summer, but was in Portsmouth working at nothing in particular for the last month (those

[1] To Elizabeth D. Pierce. Shoals, March 11, 1873

three women had been heavenly good to him, nursed him in sickness, and supposed him to be a friend). The two husbands went to Portsmouth Tuesday to sell their fish, leaving the three women, as they often had done before, alone, as we on this island have often been. In Portsmouth they found Louis and asked him to come baiting trawls with them. He pretended assent, but knowing the three women had been left alone and thinking Karen, who had just left mother's service, had money with her, he took a dory and rowed twelve miles out here in the calm night lit by a young moon, landed on Smutty a little after midnight, broke into the house in the dark and hacked and hewed those poor women till he killed two of them by sheer force of blows, chopping off Anethe's ear and smashing her skull. She had twenty wounds where he had blundered at her haphazard, in the dark! Marie told me all about it. She heard him first at Karen, rushed to see what was the matter, got three blows herself and a bruise on the jaw from a chair he flung at her when she fled, fastening the door behind her, into Anethe's room. She shook and roused the poor girl out of the deep heavy sleep of youth, and throwing some clothes over her, made her get out of the window, Louis

thundering at the door all the time to get in. In vain Marie cried "Run, run, Anethe, for your life!" Utterly bewildered and dazed, poor little Anethe cried, "I cannot move one step," and with that Louis came rushing out of the house round the corner, and Marie saw him kill Anethe with many blows, felling her to the earth. She rushed back to Karen and tried to pull her out of the house, begging her to come and save herself, but poor Karen, half dead with blows, cried only "I too tired," and Louis coming back Marie leaped from the other window and ran for her life. He struck at her with the axe as she leaped and drove it deep into the window ledge. Having to finish Karen, he delayed long enough for poor Marie to get off among the rocks. The little dog, Ringa, was barking wildly all the time. He followed Marie and was really the means of saving her life, for but for him she would have crept under one of the old fish-houses to hide, but she knew his barking would betray her. Next day the devil's bloody footsteps were found all round the old buildings where he had searched for her everywhere. Barefooted, in her nightgown, over the snow and ice and rough rocks she fled with the little Ringa, down on the uttermost end of the island, crept

into a hole and hid. The moon was just setting as she went; and there she stayed till morning, and dared not move till the sun was high, hugging Ringa to keep herself alive. Louis meanwhile finished Karen by strangling her, sought Marie in vain, took his boat and rowed to Portsmouth again, arrived there in the first sweet tranquil blush of dawn, a creature accursed, a blot on the face of the day. A heavenly day it was, calm, blue, and fair; poor Marie with her torn tender feet crawled round to Malaga opposite Ingebertsen's house, and signaled and screamed till at last they saw her, and what was good old Ingebertsen's astonishment when he went for her, to see her in her nightdress, all bruised and bloodstained, with her feet all bleeding and frozen. "Who has done it?" he kept asking and she only could answer at last, "Louis, Louis, Louis." I went over to see her at his house (on our island, you know). She clasped my hands, crying: "Oh, I so glad to see you! Oh, I so glad I saved my life!" Poor thing, she tried hard to save the others. The two husbands arrived just after Marie had been taken to Ingebertsen's. When they went into their house and saw that unspeakable sight they came reeling out and fell flat down in the snow. A watch had to be set over Ivan lest

he should destroy himself. Anethe, his precious little wife, was so lovely. Oscar was so impressed with her beauty. We begged her to come over as often as she could, it was such a pleasure to look at her!

You can't imagine how shocked and solemnized we have all been. Oscar walks up and down, now ejaculating, "Oh poor, poor things, and Anethe so beautiful, so beautiful!" Karen was quite one of the family here; it was she of whom I wrote the little spinning ballad, you know. Now I 'm afraid these dear people will all be frightened away from here and no more will come.

Wednesday, March 12. To-day, dear, I got your sweet little note. Ever so many thanks for it. Lots of newspapers came with such distracted accounts of the murder that it is enough to make anybody sick. As if a Star Islander did it! If they do not hang that wretch, law is a mockery.

Perhaps you[1] don't know that I am a fixture here for the winter. My mother has been so poorly I could not leave her, and she would not leave my brothers, so I must leave my family to take care of themselves, and stay with her,

[1] To Feroline W. Fox. Shoals, November 13, 1873.

for our family is so destitute of women it is really forlorn! No sisters, daughters, aunts, cousins, nothing but a howling wilderness of men! So it all comes on my shoulders. I would fain unite the duties of existence and have my mother at home with me, but alas, fate has arranged it otherwise, and here we are imprisoned as completely as if we were in the Bastille, a mail perhaps once in a fortnight, and the demoniacal northwest wind mounting guard over us day and night, and howling like ten thousand raving fiends. My feeling of personal spite against the northwest is something vindictive and venomous in the extreme. I'd like to blot it off the compass. The only thing I can do is to turn my back on it and try to forget it; try to forget there is such a place as out of doors at all, for the weather is something incredible, and will be from this time to next May. You never would know the place! Such a senseless, blustering cave of the winds! I suppose if the far-off continent did not hold so much that is precious for me, I should not get so vexed with the winds and waves that prevent me from hearing from my dear ones. I miss my boys so much I can't bear to think of it. As I said, you would not know the place now. All the boats are housed, not one on the

moorings of all the pretty fleet, all the familiar tops down, the dike removed that kept the water in the basin of the upper cove, the floating wharf towed into that basin and fastened with chains, not a settee on the wind-swept chilly piazzas; the music-room piled sky high with sails and traps, the eagle descended from his perch on the housetop, even the vane taken down, everything double-reefed for the hurricane in store. It is truly "remote, unfriended," solitary, "slow," but nothing to what it will be when the snow makes a bitter shroud for us. There is n't a gracious color to be seen, except the flush of sunrise, and the faint sad rose tints and sadder violets of sunset, and if you have emerged into the outer air the gale cuffs your ears to that extent that you feel personally aggrieved and disgusted. Twenty weeks of bluster between us and spring! But I would n't mind if we could only have a mail once a week. I keep very busy all the time. I wish you could see the room into which I took you to see my mother. I have taken the plants in hand, and really the desert blossoms like the rose; ten windows full; they are really splendid. A passion flower is running round the top at the rate of seven knots an hour, and I have roses, geraniums, clouds of pink oxalis, abuti-

lon, and callas in bloom; every day I spend an hour over those ten windows. Polly, my parrot, hangs at one. I don't know what we should do without her. She is so funny! She has learned my unfortunate laugh, and she keeps it up from morning till night, peal upon peal, and, no matter what may be the state of the family temper, we must join in it perforce; it is irresistible!

My dear friend, I cannot tell you how affectionately I remember you and your beautiful sister. I wish you would remember me most kindly to her and to "Carrie" and to your husband. If I only were at home I should surely try to find my way to you all, and look in your dear faces again speedily. . . . I fairly tremble when a bushel of letters are turned out of the mail-bag for me, and I am afraid to touch or look at what I am longing for so eagerly. Can't you understand how one must feel?

Nobody[1] knows how precious a word of kindness is, coming across the bitter sea to this howling wilderness of desolation, one lives so much on "the weather" here; and when all out of doors turns your deadly enemy, it is hard to bear. Oh, what do you think! on the 25th

[1] To Feroline W. Fox. Appledore, March 19, 1874.

of February I saw our song sparrows! Yes, really! I could hardly believe my eyes. I heard the cry of a bird and I listened, thinking it was the snow buntings, whose sad, sad cry often makes lonelier our loneliness, but it was repeated, and I said to myself, that cheerful chirp can belong to nothing but the dear brown bird I love; and I peered eagerly about till at last I saw him hopping contentedly among the snowbanks! I don't think I shall rejoice more if I ever chance to see the angel Gabriel's plumes of burning gold. I could scarcely believe my eyes. I went round and round him, and watched him till the cold had nearly turned me into a frozen effigy. I found his dear little tracks all about my little garden, where he had sought for any stray seeds that the weather might have spared. Thenceforth I went about strewing the ground with crumbs. The first of March a company of them were singing, and three robins beside, and yesterday, lo! a bluebird. What bliss! To-day we have been swathed in a warm fog, the snow falls off, the spring seems possible. I have been wandering on the beaches, — unless I spend just so much time out of doors, I get blue and ill, — and gathering Iceland moss for blanc-mange for the million, because I hate to be without a purpose.

It takes Thoreau and Emerson and their kind to enjoy a walk for a walk's sake, and the wealth they glean with eyes and ears. I cannot enjoy the glimpses Nature gives me half as well, when I go deliberately seeking them, as when they flash on me in some pause of work. It is like the pursuit of happiness: you don't get it when you go after it, but let it alone and it comes to you. At least this is my case. In the case of the geniuses (now is that the proper plural?) aforesaid, it is different. So I industriously filled my basket with the pretty, wet, transparent clusters lying all strewn about the beach; but I didn't fail to see how the dampness brought out the colors of stone and shell, and to be glad therefor; and I heard the living ripple of the swiftly rising tide among the ledges and boulders, and saw how it bubbled and eddied up close to the shore, for the fog pressed in so close one could not see a rod across the calm surface. And I even paused long enough to address the flood as it rushed and sang almost round my feet. "O everlasting, beautiful old eternal slop!" I said, and the force of language could no farther go. And, my basket being full, I selected a formidable club from the heaps of driftwood strewing the beach, and went to the end of the outermost

ledge and began beating off the thick, white shining girdle of salt-water ice that partially clasps each island yet. I loosened large ponderous masses, that fell with a great splash into the sea and sailed off slowly to annihilation. "Go, go," I cried, "and never come back again! I hate you!" and I assailed it with wrath till I had beaten the rock quite free, and I was tired enough to be glad to sit down and watch the floating fetters I had cast loose as they swam heavily away.

I send you two or three thoughts of God, out of the great, rough, fierce Atlantic. Who would think its bitter wrath and tumult could hide such delicate and tender fancies!

I[1] am full of sadness and of sympathy over this terrible disaster. Hardly can I think of anything else, and those two dear people haunt my little room, the sunny piazza, the little garden; I see and hear them everywhere. How gentle they were, how sweet and good and noble. How *can* we spare them, and fools and knaves are cumbering the earth! I have such a letter of sorrow from S. C., who grew so attached to them here: "That dear, splendid little doctor! To think of the cruelty of her tender body be-

[1] To Annie Fields. Shoals, May 20, 1874.

ing beaten on the rocks!" Ah, I wish the sea would stop its roar, so soft and far from rim to rim of this great horizon! It makes me shudder when I think of them and how it sounded in their ears! How brave Mrs. Greene is, sure that all that is *must* be best! glad for them that they could go in the midst of the joy of life, with all their enthusiasm, spared all life's disappointments, safe from any suffering like hers! She is a marvel. Yes, dear, she sent me the little paper, writing my name on it and hers with her own hand. And I must write to her, but hardly dare to speak.

I think I shall not see the mainland again till autumn, unless sickness summons me. It is heavenly beautiful here now, "so sweet with voices of the birds," so green and still and flower-strewn. Only I am too much alone, and get sadder than death with brooding over this riddle of life; and Nature is so placid; and the sea and the rocks have ground the life out of those two to whom life was so sweet. Oh, how hard it must have been to yield it up! I can see how they looked, what they did, what they said; my imagination *will not* cease picturing it all.

Now[1] that the daily communication with the continent is at last established, I feel so close to all my friends! Quite within reach of everybody, and I am so thankful! I only wish it could last forever! I cannot tell you how I have enjoyed the spring, how doubly beautiful every softening aspect of nature has been to me, after the winter's discontent and poverty. Really I think the world never began to be so beautiful before! The birds do sing so; and as for the sandpipers, when I hear them calling in the rich twilights, it seems to me that there is nothing more to be desired on earth. I have not seen one lilac spike, not one apple blossom, this year, but I 'd rather have the sandpipers if I can't have both! I hear the country has been radiant with blossoms. Well, I am more than content with what I have. I don't envy you a bit. My little garden sprang into such life of a sudden; all the seeds I planted, and a million more beside, came rushing up out of the ground so fast that I hardly knew how to manage them, and have been obliged to throw away enough flowers to stock half a dozen gardens, in order to let the remaining plants have room to grow. Such mats of pansies! And that flaming California poppy has spread every-

[1] To Feroline W. Fox. Shoals, June 16, 1874.

where. It breaks my heart to have to pull up a single one! Ranks of sweet-peas I have, and mignonette by the bushel. If I can only keep the weeds away! I wish I could show you my pretty awning on the west piazza, it is so gay and effective, with broad stripes of blue and white and edges of scarlet. They are cutting the grass on the lawn to-day, and the air is so sweet with land and sea scents!

I[1] have just made a discovery which fills me with — "vexation" I think would be the proper word; namely, that your son has been here for a week, and I did not know him and nobody told me he was here! . . .

Dear friend, I have to thank you for the postal card about planting the lilies. How good you are to me! Did Carry tell you I have taken to painting, — "wrastling with art," I call it, in the wildest manner? This woodbine leaf at the top of the first page of this note I copied from nature. Of course it is n't very good, but it shows hope of better things, don't you think so? Do say you do! I can scarcely think of anything else. I want to paint everything I see; every leaf, stem, seed vessel, grass blade, rush, and reed and flower has new charms, and

[1] To Feroline W. Fox. Shoals, September 22, 1874.

I thought I knew them all before. Such a new world opens, for I feel it in me; I know I can do it, and I am going to do it! What a resource for the dreary winter days to come! I know you will be glad for me.

See, I made this red leaf for you[1] above. I gathered it from a wild vine that crimsoned over a rough gray stone, and copied it as near as I could. Not very well, but I have n't had a lesson yet, and of course one can't be perfect in a first effort. But do be glad for me that I can do it, it is such a delight, such a resource in the drear days to come to look forward to!

Tell me, is your sermon in answer to Tyndall's address (which, by the way, I have just got hold of in the "Popular Science Monthly," and have n't yet read) to be published anywhere? And, if so, won't you send it to me, please? Would I could have heard it!

It is lovely yet here; the little room is so cozy, still bright with flowers and firelight, and prettier yet for my paraphernalia of painting, and groups of burning red and golden leaves, and tiny brown rushes and grasses and poppy-heads and larkspur spikes, all sorts of studies to gloat over. I have made a little vignette of White Island.

[1] To John Weiss. Shoals, September 26, 1874.

Well,[1] the beautiful summer has gone at last, and all the dear people except Miss Parkman, who, faithfullest of the faithful, would gladly stay here all winter with me if she could. This is the wildest wild night, — floods of rain and a hurricane from the stormy east; but here in the cottage parlor the fire burns bright, the gas fills the room with light, the rich flowers glow and send out fragrance. My davenport I have wheeled to the fireside. Karl and Miss Parkman are playing bézique close by. The room is so charming! there are thirty-two pictures in it now. I had such a birthday! No end of pictures and things. It was on the 29th of June, and I was smothered with roses. How happy I was! Oh, what a lovely, lovely summer! I must tell you something nice. I have begun to draw and paint, and find I can do it, even without lessons, with more or less success, so that I am sure that by and by, after I have had some lessons, I can do it well. It is so delightful! I want to paint everything I see. It will be such a resource in winter loneliness to come, for I expect to spend the greater part of the winter here. Though my mother is better now than she has been for two years, I don't dare to leave her all alone with only the ser-

[1] To Elizabeth D. Pierce. Shoals, September 29, 1874.

vants and my brothers in this great loneliness. Alas that it should be so! I do so dread the exile, the bitter, long loneliness. It is only the sense of duty done that keeps one's head above water in such a case.

I am so glad you liked the little song. If only you could hear the music! It is delicious; and I have just written one called "Forebodings," which Mr. Eichberg has also set to music, and which he says is the best thing he has ever composed, which, considering the beautiful things he has done, is saying a great deal.

Your letter was so pleasant! Do write to me as often as you can, and give me a blink of your light and joy in my white, stark desolation here in the howling Atlantic.

I think I did not thank you[1] half enough for the address you sent, and for your delightful note about it. I read Tyndall's address twice over, and yours also, with supreme satisfaction. Will he read what you have said? He ought to see it. What a joy to find himself so understood and appreciated! I have been extremely interested in Professor Huxley's address before the British Association, which I have in the

[1] To John Weiss. Shoals, October 17, 1874.

"Living Age." There is nothing so interesting to me as this quarrying of bright minds, this digging at the roots of things. "Your little hatchet," — oh, what a weapon! swift, sharp, invisible, resistless. It is like a scythe, as Mr. Eichberg says; it cuts a broad swath every time you speak.

The little cottage is deserted now, and I have turned the key on that dear loneliness. The pictures look down in stillness; the vases are empty, the books unopened; no fire blazes on the hearth; not even a fly buzzes in the window; it is desolate! But outside the little garden blooms, still full of color and fragrance, for no sign of frost has fallen upon us yet. I have moved to mother's room. Through the ten windows the sun streams delightfully in clear days, and everything grows and blooms. Every day the doves flock in at the door, over the threshold, to be fed, and little brown song sparrows come too, and hop over the floor, as tame as chickens. Your E—— is pretty well, but every time the thermometer goes down, her strength and spirits go with it. The cold destroys her. I dread the winter with an inexpressible dread.

You[1] have "no news, nothing to communicate," and you tell me this delightful story of Tyndall's gladness, which makes me glow with joy. Well may he be glad and proud! Oh, why cannot I always hear you, I wonder! I wish for it most ardently. For God leads you up to the heights, and you call us up to you.

No wonder Tyndall took your "discourse to bed, but not to sleep"! Your note has made this dull day of November warm and bright. Be sure no human creature rejoices in your joy more sincerely, with more loving enthusiasm, than your grateful CELIA THAXTER.

My dear boy,[2] I miss "people and things" very much in my solitude, but there might be a worse lot and I won't complain, though it is sometimes a hard fight between myself and the blues when I do not get a mail for twelve days, as happened lately.

Oh, how long it seems to summer! I can hardly believe there will ever be another, and that all my friends, or so many of them, will come back to bless me with their presence. I wish I had a little painting for you, Árpàd dear,

[1] To John Weiss. Shoals, November 22, 1874.

[2] To Árpàd Sàndor Grossman. Shoals, November 23, 1874.

but next time I write I shall hope to have something. It is such a pleasure to find I can do it, you can't imagine! And I have not had a lesson as yet, not one, and I find I can make little land and sea scapes, besides flowers and leaves and ferns and berries, and all sorts of pretty things.

My[1] heart is sick with the terrors of these wintry shoals. Night before last a large schooner went ashore on Duck Island, — do you remember it? — lying eastward of us, a mere reef. Your father used to go there with Waldemar to fish for perch. It was snowing and blowing like forty thousand devils! They went ashore at about eleven o'clock. The captain, William Henry Keen, and another, were drowned. "Boys, we must die here," he said; "may God forgive me if I have wronged any man!" and then the wave washed the poor captain away. Five men scrambled on to the rock and *clung there all night*, in constant danger of being washed off. Oh those hours, interminable, bitter, dreary, till the drear day dawned! At daylight a fishing schooner passing saw their signals and rescued them. We knew nothing of it till yesterday afternoon, when the discovery

[1] To Anna Eichberg. Shoals, March 26, 1875.

of the wreck on the reef filled us with dismay. It was blowing — ah, how useless to try to tell you *how* it was blowing — northwest! I can't describe it to you. Karl was set to watch if any sign of life appeared, and my brothers would have pushed off at the risk of their lives; but while no sign of life appeared, we waiting prayed the hurricane might go down with the sun: but no, we were forced to go to bed distressed with the thought that the poor sailors might be dying of cold and exhaustion so near, and we unable to help them. Not till three o'clock this morning did the wind lull, and then Oscar and Cedric started, rowing together over the black, still howling water in the brassy moonlight. They reached the reef in the gray dawn and sought everywhere; could find nobody. At daybreak the fishing schooner came down, and told them the survivors were saved. It was all equipped for wrecking, with men and tools and long knives and hatchets. All day the island has been surrounded by flocks of sails, like birds, the few poor people here, the Ingebertsens and others, being allowed to secure as much of the driftwood as they could; and Hans, our man Bernhardt's eldest boy, with his brother Karl, a morsel of a child, went, too; made several trips, and the last one,

as he came in his tiny cockle-shell heavily laden, a fiend's squall broke out of the south, with terrible thick snow, and Hans has disappeared! All the other boats got in, but poor Hans in his own land was a telegraph operator, and knows no more how to handle a boat than any landlubber, and where he will go, or how escape death, we know not, and are devoured with anxiety. Poor Bernhardt is almost beside himself; a little while ago I met him on the piazza, blinking the snow and the tears out of his poor, honest eyes. I am the only woman who has been told. Hans's two sisters, Mina and Ovidia, would go wild; they know nothing at all, they do not guess, and my mother would be too horribly distressed. Bernhardt has gone over in all the storm to Smutty Nose to try to console his wife; they are all so fond of each other, these good Norwegian people. Ah me, my heart aches for them. Where are those two boys! The sea is black and white as death, with horrible long billows that break and roar aloud. Their only hope is to steer for the continent, if only Hans has sense enough! The great danger, too, of that poor, little, tender boy freezing to death, — how horrible it all is! Captain Keen's body was found this afternoon and taken to the land. The schooner was the

Birkmyre, from Goniss, Hayti, loaded with logwood for Boston. We had hardly got over the other trouble and fear about Julius Ingebertsen. Now comes all this. What next? Oh, how long to wait before, if they are alive or dead, those poor boys! My brothers walk the floor, up and down, up and down, they are so anxious and sorry; and the storm rages, cruel, inexorable, unmerciful, bitter.

Saturday night. They are saved! But only the chance of their having on board a firkin picked up from the wreck saved them; with this they bailed the water out that filled the boat every few minutes, and flying before the gale reached the shore, and happily the mouth of the Piscataqua River. Poor little Karl was so spent Hans had to carry him in his arms to the shelter they found. Hans had seen the body of the drowned captain drawn up from the bottom of the sea about Duck Island in the afternoon, and it was such a frightful, intolerable sight, he saw it all the time the storm was beating on them, and the great waves tossing them, as it seemed, to certain destruction. We did not know till noon that they were safe. Poor Bernt was working doggedly all the morning calking the Lone Star, lying in the upper cove, and all the time weeping bitterly: to lose

both boys at once! Oh, when the girls were told of it! Could you have seen them! Mina sobbed and wept, and they trembled, poor things, like aspen leaves. Not a thing did they know till the good news came. I was so glad we had kept it from them. Such a night as their father and mother spent last night! I was up early, but not so early but that faithful Bernt was at his work, and I called to him, "Bernt, have they come back?" He shook his head; he could not speak.

After I have heard you[1] speak, I feel as if I had been looking through one of the great telescopes that bring the awful stars so near; there is the same sense of wonder and of awe.

I am going to Montpelier, to visit there a lady who has been begging me to go to her for nearly twenty years. Little she knows how glad I am to go! I never traveled so far before. I shall see effulgence in the way of color at M., for the trees will be in their glory, and the mountains are beautiful. . . .

We went to ride this morning, in an open carriage with two gay steeds, up and down among the superb mountains. From the heights, the hills were like the sea with a combination

[1] To John Weiss. Autumn, 1875.

of "long swell" and "chop" crossing it, and against the sky the mountains on the horizon seemed to be heaved like petrified waves ready to break. And the trees! fires and flames; incandescence was the only word I could think of to fit the situation. Burning coals the maples were, and where the frost had touched some of the tops it was like white ashes; I expected to see smoke rising. Then the gold and topaz and amber flaring up into the blue of the clear sky, and the garnets and rubies! it was magnificent. Maples bigger than I ever dreamed they could grow, in such ranks, looking as if they had had such a good time all their lives, with nothing on earth to disturb them, and plenty of room to grow and attain to the fullest perfection. Enough to do you good it was to see them! These people are so nice; know you, read all they can get hold of, of yours and every other man who speaks sense. I tried to give them some of your remarks about Providence to refresh these good friends.

I must tell you![1] I came home like a raving lion and tore my new bonnet limb from limb, cut off half a yard of that heaven-aspiring coronet, and in the twinkling of an eye turned the

[1] To Annie Fields. Newtonville, November 13, 1875.

whole structure into one of grace and elegance. (Ahem!) But really, you would imagine me to be at least ten years younger, and that peace which somebody said the consolations of religion failed to bring, is mine, — that of being fitly bonneted!

I know you[1] thought of us in the terrific storm yesterday. It *was* terrific truly! Had it continued another twenty-four hours it would not have left stick or stone on the Shoals, I do believe. It is utterly indescribable. Everything that *could* move in the house shook and jingled and rattled, and the roar in the sky was perfectly deafening, and the sea was really "mountains high." The "Old Harry," invisible generally, "broke solid," as the Shoalers say, every minute, and all the islands were lost in the clouds of flying foam. I went to the top of the house for a moment with my brothers; such a sight has n't been seen since the Minot's Ledge storm. Our only yacht, the Lone Star, sank at her moorings and is lost. She was our only winter dependence, poor old craft. She served us long and well, and we are sorry she is gone. We feared to see the solid pier depart piecemeal, but the gale lulled in

[1] To Annie Fields. Shoals, March 22, 1876.

time to save it. The wind and water were blown through and through the house; windows and doors seemed no barriers at all. My screens served good purpose. I barricaded my mother with them from the wind, and made her quite snug and comfortable. But I sat in my winter sack (outside sack) all day! To-day two big steamers have been cruising about for wrecks. I dread to hear of the disasters that must have happened. This morning the sun rose clear and crimson, and dived forthwith into a cloud, and then it snowed thickly till noon, when it cleared with a wild west wind. We dare hope for news from the continent to-morrow.

Mr. Howells has returned my MS., and wants me to make it more imaginative, — set my "constructive faculty" to work upon it, for it is full of fine material. He is right, but supposing one has n't any constructive faculty? Du lieber Gott! then one must live without any gowns. Plain facts won't earn them. If one could only be as economical as Mr. Emerson's aunt, who wore her shroud alike for life and death!

I am so blue (let me whisper in your kind ear!) that I feel as if I bore the car of Juggernaut upon my back day after day. I totally disbelieve in any sunrise to follow this pitch-

black night. I believe I am going to see everything of a funereal purple color from this time forth and forever! But nobody guesses it. I don't tell anybody but you, whose mind is so empty of occupation, you know, and who have no drains on your sympathy!

Mr. Whittier has sent me a dear letter and "Mabel Martin," with a poem written on the fly-leaf, — a little dear, sweet poem, all for poor, ungrateful, undeserving me.

I have been reading Howells's story. How *good* it is! How slight the fabric, yet how firm and flawless, how delicate and fine! Oh for his gift!

23d March. Well-beloved, how grateful I am to you for the dear letter which comes to-day! And do let me thank you here for the letters you have forwarded; the one from the Cowden Clarkes to-day was lovely, full of flowers, Venus' hair, daisies, violets, primroses, and a small pink rose "gathered at the Terrace fountain, March 2d," for poor me. Such a lovely letter! I am so grateful for it!

24th, Friday. Tired am I to-night, dear, for I have been scouring the coasts of my melancholy isle this afternoon, trying to find seaweeds to return to the Cowden Clarkes for their flowers. But the breakers have washed

the rocks bare and clean! Absolutely I could find nothing, and was so disappointed. . . .

Saturday. All day a choking snowstorm, to-night floods of rain; and the sound of pouring water rejoices my heart, for it means the bare earth shall be restored to our longing sight again. This morning after breakfast I was rowed out to investigate the mooring buoys and ropes; seeking seaweeds still, found scarcely any: the sleet lashed my face, and the cold brine stung my hands like bitter fire. All day I have been at work over the few weeds I found, nothing worth speaking of, hardly worth arranging. There are certain cracks and crannies, deep fissures in the eastern coast, I mean to investigate before I give up my hopes, but I fear the tempests have left me nothing.

Sunday. Oh, Annie, this morning a brig went ashore on White Island ledge in the fog, at eight o'clock. The breakers tore off her stern and drowned five men there, then tossed the vessel upon Londoners', close by us, and drowned three more. Only one man escaped to tell the tale, and he says he knows not how he saved his life; he found himself on shore, banged and bruised, all his mates gone and the great brig a heap of bristling ruins, broken in half, high and dry on the iron rocks.

There is a little deserted hut on the island, and he made his way to that, found a stove and fuel within and kindled a fire there. The smoke of this fire was seen soon as the fog lifted, but the vessel was so smashed to pieces it was n't visible from a distance. Part of the vessel's log drifted to our island, a couple of loose pages; and a huge round hoop, one of those which hold a sail to a mast. I cannot describe to you how dreadfully we feel about it, so near us! That one survivor is at Star Island; how he must feel to-night! The leaves of the log-book were records of days last August, on a voyage from Annapolis, N. B., to Barbadoes. All sorts of things drift ashore. I am afraid of the beaches. Eight men are lying drowned about these remorseless rocks. Poor mother is so distressed with it all! The storm was so tremendous in the night she could hardly sleep at all. I never heard a more frightful tumult. It seemed as if we must be thrust off into the sea with the might of the wind.

Monday morning. The Molly is coming, and I close my letter to have it ready. My brother is going to Portsmouth for another yacht, the Pilgrim, to take the Lone Star's place; she was lost in the storm before this.

You[1] remember Londoners' Island, where you and I went for morning glories? — where your papa pursued the pensive perch on summer afternoons? Alas, how can I stop to think of jests! A brig lies there smashed to atoms, eight men drowned, but one alive to tell the tale, of all the crew. She struck this morning at eight o'clock, in broad daylight (but there was a thick fog), on the outlying rocks of White Island; a breaker carried off part of her stern and drowned five of her crew! Then she rolled and wallowed to Londoners' and went ashore there on the western slope of the beach, where the tender green morning-glory vines and rosy blossoms blow gently in the summer time, as you and I found them, — don't you remember? — like a soft, green cascade down the beach. There the brig was tossed and smashed in two, the two halves lying jammed together on end. There three more men were drowned. Think of the force of the sea that could use the huge hull of a vessel like a child's toy! The mate alone escaped: he says he knows not how he did it, but he found himself lying bruised and aching there on the beach, the brig a mass of bristling timbers, sails torn to ribbons and rags, masts entirely vanished, his mates all drowned.

[1] To Anna Eichberg. Sunday, March 26th.

He crept up to that little house, you know, now deserted, and found there a stove and fuel and he lit a fire. It was the smoke of this fire which was seen when the fog lifted in the afternoon, and the people from Star went over to Londoners'. We did not know anything of it till nearly sunset, for the fog lingered low and the wreck is such a heap of ruins as hardly to be visible from afar. Part of her log, a few loose sheets, drifted over here, and one of the great wooden rings that held her sails to the masts. The storm was beyond description frightful last night. Such a month of March as this I have never known.

Dear child,[1] I have been over to see the wreck! My brother Cedric rowed me over to Londoners' this afternoon. It was perfectly still and bright. The huge vessel lay on the western side of the beach, not far from our morning-glory garden. Oh, such a sight! Crushed like an eggshell, broken in two, with the forward half standing upright and pointing to heaven with its splintered timbers. Her huge beams were snapped like sticks of macaroni, and frayed at the ends like crossway ravelings; such a total and gigantic destruction is not to be de-

[1] To Anna Eichberg. Shoals, March 28, 1876.

scribed. Her sails strewed the whole beach in tatters not larger than a handkerchief, and the whole island seemed to have been the scene of some giant's preparations for kindling his kitchen fire, — one heap of splintered fragments. When we landed, my eyes swept the distracted beach with keen inquiry. Eight dead men are lying about the ledges: everywhere I feared to see a ghastly face, a hand, a foot, beneath the water or upon the shore. Cables, chains, ropes, rigging, anchors, ruins of all sorts, were half buried in the rough beach. . . . One thick gray vest lay in a pool, and stared up at me with ghastly white horn buttons, like dead eyes. Iron bolts four feet long were curved and twisted like leaden hairpins; the heaviest timbers smashed, broken into squares. I never imagined anything like it. I brought home a bit of the tremendous thick, stout sails. I saw a single perch dragged from the deepest deeps and flung high and dry to die in a dry agony, all black and scarlet. No perch yet dare to haunt the shores within reach of man, but next month they will make their appearance, coming in from deep water.

March 30, Thursday. It is bright to-day, and the Molly is out on the fishing grounds and we are sure she has a mail on board, but it

blew so hard she did not stop on her way out. So I close my letters to be ready for her when she stops on her way in. I hope you will get your little plume with this. I send a bit of the wreck's sail; see how strong and new it was, and how the edges are frayed with the fearful chafing of a few hours in that angry sea. Did I tell you? the brig was forty days out from Liverpool to Boston, loaded with salt.

So[1] bitter a storm rages! The worst yet. Just now we came near having the roof crushed in by a falling chimney, but my brothers saw it tottering just in time, and lashed it with ropes of wire, iron ropes. It was so lucky it did n't fall, for it is the largest one and would have crushed everything beneath, and made a hideous ruin. It is such a dreadful night! The snow and sleet are beating against the windows, and we can have no fire, for the wind blows it all straight out of stove or fireplace, gas, flame, ashes, even brands and coal! We are sitting with the window open, choked with gas and half frozen, wrapped in all our outer garments, and the snow blowing over our heads! What a nice state of things! I am in deadly terror lest my poor mother should take cold. The

[1] To Annie Fields. Shoals, April 4, 1876.

chimney to mother's student lamp has just cracked where a snowflake blew against it. The three student lamps flare and flicker in the blast, and there is such a roaring and thundering as is fearful to hear. Ah me, will there ever be an end to it all! Never was such a spring known before!

6th, Thursday. Well, we lived through it somehow, and yesterday the wind had hauled a point or two, enough to liberate the fireplaces, so we struggled through; and to-day the wind is southwest and still, though the breakers rear their crested heads on all sides. This has been the worst storm yet. The sea began to sweep into the garden toward the big house; a little longer and our plight would indeed have been forlorn. But it always lulls in time to save us. Some day it won't, however, and off we shall go. I wish I could show you a pepper-box from the wrecked brig, the quaintest thing, made of creamy white antique crockery, shaped like an ancient lighthouse. The pepper is put in at the bottom, which is then corked. I wonder where it was made. I 'd give much to know its history. Such a quaint thing I have never seen. Yesterday I made a cushion for my sofa. Not having learned an upholsterer's trade, it was difficult to pick over all

the wool and hair and rearrange it, and then cover it and prick it through with a big needle, and then put on my beautiful Fairchild brocade. Did I tell you? they sent me enough for my sofa. That was very kind, was n't it? I wanted buttons, but had n't any; so I took manilla rope and made tufts where I fastened it through and through.

I[1] am at this present wild about R. W. Gilder's poem, "The New Day;" it is the most exquisite thing I have seen in these modern times. The whole book, with its peacocks' feathers and poppies and daisies and wild roses, is so beautiful! And as for the poems, there 's no English to tell their beauty. Could I but fly to your side with it, and have one little half hour's delight with you over it! Oh these sonnets: "The proud, full sail of this great verse!" Don't get the book (were I only where I could get it for you!), but wait and see mine with me first, and *do*, DO, DO come.

What shall I write to you[2] about from this supreme loneliness? It has stormed for five days wearily, wearily; no mail all that time

[1] To Annie Fields. Shoals, June 29, 1876.
[2] To Richard H. Derby. Shoals, December 11, 1876.

The thermometer has only fallen to eight degrees above zero, but that was cold enough, and the tempest was savage, and the face of the gale was awful to behold, — the sea black, swollen, angry, streaming with hoary vapor from the cold, and flinging broadsides of freezing spray all over the island; snow falling, hissing, whispering, lashing the window panes; the noise of breakers booming and thundering; and the voice of the wind wailing, howling, expostulating, shrieking. Eleven panes of glass were broken in the dining-room with missiles flung by the wind.

So the hurricane had a fine time careering through the house. I wanted a book at the cottage. Nobody could venture for it till to-day, when the wind has lulled a little. It might as well have been in Portsmouth for all the good it did me. Think what it must be to live for five days in the centre of such an insane tumult! But I haven't thought of it, busied in my writing-desk and paint-box. I am painting on china now. It is most exquisite work, fit for the fairies.

Last night I had a shock that nearly stopped the beating of my heart. When I left home I told my husband if he ever wanted me, if any one were ill or anything, to telegraph to Captain Rand, of the steam-tug Clara Bateman, in

Portsmouth, and he would come for me, in any weather. Well, last night at ten o'clock, just as we had gone to bed (I sleep in my mother's room), I heard through the hoarse breathing of the gale the long, low, melancholy peal of a steamer's whistle. Heavens! I was up in a moment. No one heard it except myself. I threw something over me and pushed up the window, and leaned far out into the fury of the storm. The wind cuffed and buffeted my defenseless head and the snow melted on my face; but through the cannonading of billows, and all the confusion of sounds, came again that long, sad moan, like a cry for help, for human succor or divine aid. Nearer and nearer it came, every moment louder and louder, till at last it passed us by and went wandering out to the eastward, some poor, bewildered vessel, uncertain of her way. But I was sure at first it was the Clara Bateman come for me, and I hardly dared to breathe till I heard no longer that sombre, startling sound. I trust she came to no harm, but what anxious hours must have crept over that vessel till dawn! To-night the world is quite calm in comparison to what it has been. Just before sunset I ventured out into the office to see what I could see. I found the office windows so shrouded in snow and spray I

could not look out; so I picked my way through the snow on the floor, opened the outside door and peered out. Such a bleared and ghastly scene! Solid ice about the island shore; wharf and crane a mountain of solid salt-water ice and frost; snow everywhere; the sea dull olive-green and black; a rift of stormy gray in the sky. A huge black bird, a shag, rose from the rock opposite me and flew ponderously away. The gulls soared and shrieked. I ran back and crept to the fireside.

In the year 1877 letters began to reach her friends from the islands, speaking of her mother's severe and continued illness. In one of them she says: —

I'm *so* tired! My patient caught cold. My life is passed in watching draughts and covering her. I went to Portsmouth to see the doctor; had to stay over night: it was like heaven, the little rest, and the sight of the blossoms and the green earth, and the dear, kind De Normandies.

Not three weeks and the doctor can come every day in the steamer to see my mother. If I only can keep up! Last night something so queer happened. I am obliged to keep a German student lamp burning all night, though I hate the glare; for I must spring, with all my wits and all my implements of war, the

instant I am wanted, to the rescue, and there 's no time to fuss with lamps. Two or three of the sashes were down in the big bay-window, and between two and three o'clock in the morning it began softly to rain, and all at once the room filled with birds. Song sparrows, flycatchers, wrens, nuthatches, yellow birds, thrushes, all kinds of lovely feathered creatures, fluttered in and sat on picture frames and gas fixtures, or whirled, agitated, round in mid-air; while troops of others beat their heads against the glass outside, vainly striving to get in. The light seemed to attract them as it does the moths. I had finally to put it out. We had no peace, there was such a crowd, such cries and chirps and flutterings! I never heard of such a thing, did you?

This afternoon,[1] while mother slept, I sat with her, and laid on my only tile, first, a warm summer sky of delicate flushed rose melting into softest pearly gray high up (the sky which faces the west at sunset); and far off on the horizon I made the low hills melt in distance; and nearer, quiet green fields and bits of wood with groups of poplar and thicker masses of green; then a low garden wall, and inside the

[1] To Annie Fields, 1877.

garden that lovely, pensive Mistress Mary, copied straight out of the baby's opera. I have n't finished it; my human figure is only outlined. I know it will be difficult, but I think it can be done, that delicate work of copying the face and hands and arms. Mr. Hunt said to me once, "You are not afraid; therefore you will be able to do anything," and I never forget it. I live in these little landscapes I fashion; I love the flowers, and living things, and quaint Japanese I work among, with a perfect passion. It is all my entertainment, all the amusement I have, you know. I am up at six o'clock every morning, often before, laying my plans for dinner for the family of eleven (for since mother has been ill, six weeks now, I have attended to the housekeeping), getting ready the dessert, and laying everything in train for the noonday meal, that I may paint every minute of daylight that I can steal. I take a cup of coffee, then arrange my cooking, and then sit down at my desk and write till the sun rises, by my student lamp, as fast as I can, so not to take my time of sunshine for it. We have breakfast at eight, when my brothers come down. My little Norwegians are such treasures! So sweet to look at, so gently bred, with manners as near perfect as they can be. Ovidia, Anna Bergetta, Anto-

nine, — they are charming. They take such delight in this fairyland of painting, and watch from afar, and gloat over near, if permitted, everything I do, and clasp their hands and cry, "Oh, how *can* anything in the world be so beautiful as that!" It is all their amusement, too. Oh, it is almost spring.

I have painted this winter one hundred and fourteen pieces for different people, — cups, saucers, plates of all kinds, a great deal of immensely careful and elaborate work. Some Japanese things I have been doing are really lovely, — plates, tinted first pale sea-green, and a Japanese lady, a beauty, no clodhopper, in the middle of each, with birds or butterflies or bats or turtles, swallows, dragon-flies, lizards, beetles, any and every thing, on the border, with flowers and grasses or leaves, all copied from the Japanese, *not* evolved out of my inner consciousness, and so sure to be good. The plate I sent you would have been nicer had it been a tile. It was n't anything, you know, only lovely and queer, with the morning moon setting, and the sad, still water, the hint of trouble in the clouds, and the drear black ravens. I don't know anything, but I 'm learning.

I thank you[1] for all your kindness; it is your kindness that touches and consoles me. Now let me tell you my great good news. We are all going to move to Portsmouth for the winter. Our man of business in that town is looking up houses at this present moment, and I am presently to go to town and choose. Think of that! I know you will be glad for me. It seems all like a dream. If we only can get mother over! But when the moment comes the strength will come, I hope. I fear there will not be much time for painting anything; orders still pour in, but housekeeping in P. will not leave me much margin, I fear, with the constant care of so great an invalid. But I don't care for anything, so long as I get her within reach of help.

This is only a word to tell you. Oh, but I must not forget Appleton Brown. He has painted a picture of my little garden, sitting in one corner looking across through the fence at the sparkling, tranquil afternoon sea, — looking across a mystic tangle of straggling green, all spangled and sprinkled with stars of gold and purple and scarlet, to a mass of cloud-white phlox and the tall black larkspur spikes gone to seed, tall indeed against the sunlit sky; a bit of

[1] To Annie Fields. Shoals, August 21, 1877.

the piazza and the striped awning. And the picture is exquisite, brimful of sentiment and beauty. Do make them go down to you; you will be perfectly charmed with them, as we all are.

My eyes are stiff with weeping and watching, but I want to send you a word. My beautiful, dear mother is sinking away, and we are heart-broken beyond bearing. It seems as if I *must* go, too; I cannot let her go alone. She lies looking like an angel, talking and babbling of green fields, and clinging to us, and whispering blessings, and smiling as no one else can smile for us in the wide world. Almost I perish in the grasp of this grief. What do I care for this world without her? If I could but go, too!

Dearest Annie,[1] this morning, at half past seven, the sweetest mother in the world went, God alone knows where, away from us! There is no comfort for us anywhere except by the gradual hand of time. The "consolations of religion" I cannot bear. I can bear my anguish better than their emptiness, though I am crushed breathless by my sorrow. It seems as if I could never fill my lungs with air again, as if I never wished to look upon the light of day.

[1] To Annie Fields. Wednesday night, November 14, 1877.

She lies close by me, like a lily flower, her snow-white hair under her snow-white cap of delicate lace, and her sweet hands folded, her pillow strewn with the brightest flowers that blow, — scarlet geraniums, gold chrysanthemums, and blood-red roses and bright blush roses. She is white enough to cool their ardent colors, and beautiful she looks. "Don't bring me your sick tints," I cried, "your fainting heliotropes and sallow tea-rose buds half blown. This is not their place; they are beautiful where they belong, but not by the dead. Flowers with life in them, and warmth and gladness, — those are what belong here." So they brought the most glorious armful of beauty. Ah, how she loved them, my poor mother! I never left her a moment this last week; she clung to my hand day and night. We had no stranger. Mina and I did everything ourselves, night and day. This morning, when she died, we did for her all that was necessary, and made her comely and beautiful for her coffin, with only our own hands. She breathed her life away so softly she looks like a dear, quiet child.

It seems as if the whole range of the Himalayas lay upon my heart. Shall I ever breathe freely again, I wonder!

We carried my dear mother out to the island

and buried her by my father. . . . All was done as she would have wished: no alien eyes watched her last moments, no strange hands touched her after she was dead; all was as she would have wished. A large anchor of shining ivy leaves had been sent. I dropped it upon her coffin down into the grave, the symbol of hope. I *hope* all things, I believe nothing. Still the face of the sky is dreadful to me. I don't know when this terrible weight will wear itself away. By and by, perhaps, I shall be able to bear the sight of the sun.

I wanted to run with your[1] letter to mother just as soon as I saw the handwriting. Oh, dear! Sunday night was divinely beautiful, the sky all red with sunset, the sea all silver calm, the little moon shining white high in the sky. I got the girls to help me, and we all went carrying blossoming plants — heliotropes, geraniums, fuchsias, pansies all in bloom — up to the dear grave, and they helped me set them all out, and they made a blaze of the beautiful colors she loved in the green and quiet place. And then I went and got my brothers and showed them what I had done, and we nearly perished of it all, the miserable sense of empti

[1] To Lucy Derby. Shoals, June 11, 1878.

ness and loss that seems as if it never could be appeased.

The garden is full of things, the phlox in its old place and all the same. The honeysuckle is in a tempest of blossoming. All mother's beloved plants I have and watch and tend on the piazza. Here is a crimson gillyflower which never blossomed for her, dear soul! That is in a blaze of beauty. I am almost angry with it for being so beautiful when she cannot see it. . . .

"Lorna Doone"? Why, I 've lived on it ever since it first saw the light! Read it a dozen times. I 'm glad you 've found Blackmore, for I think there 's nobody like him.

I don't know where you[1] are. In Manchester, I hope. Heaven love you and bless you, wherever you are. It is six o'clock this blue, bright summer morning. I am sitting on my piazza with my back to the sun, in front of me, a little at one side, my big honeysuckle in a tempest of blossoming sweetness to the very roof of the piazza. Over the hammock, at the end, is a swallow's nest, and the little mother is sitting, all fluffed up as if she were chilly, on the hammock rope, and the father darts in and

[1] To Annie Fields. Shoals, June 13, 1878.

out and round about with a thousand chirpings and melodious cries. There is a great crimson gillyflower, with fragrance like a draught of perfumed wine, close at the edge of the piazza: it is so delicious! They would be good for you at Manchester — "stocks," for they come up every year without sowing; the same plant lasts a lifetime, and they are every divine color the Lord has made. On the calm, blue sea lies many a dreaming sail, and a big gundalow with a lateen sail makes me think of the Mediterranean; never could that sea be bluer and calmer than this. I am all wrapped up in your lovely fluffy white shawl; it is so pretty and such a comfort! I live in it, and am so grateful to you. It wraps me about like the soft warmth of your loving kindness, you dearest; and when I think for whom you meant it first, it is more precious still, that you could have found it in your heart to give it to me.

Friday morning. Again on the piazza, in the same place, and everything the same, the parrot coaxing me with "Good morning! good morning, dear!" To-day the whole world begins to arrive! . . . But now begins telling over my sad story, over and over and over. Before the summer has done, I hope I shall have learned to bear it.

My[1] summer has been divine, though I have worked harder than ever before. When I came down here, I never in my life had been so low in my mind. I missed my mother so I knew not which way to turn. But Heaven sent down here a musician, who played Beethoven to me morning, noon, and night the livelong summer, and cured my sick soul as a splendid tonic cures a sick body. Mr. and Mrs. Paine, from Cambridge, — Professor Paine, you know, of Harvard, — happened to come here, — came for a week and stayed six and more; and though he did not intend to play, and I never asked him, he found out how much it was to me, and played to me hours every day. I cannot tell you what it was to me. I have not stopped working once, not one day, all summer. While the music went on, while the people went in and out and talked and talked, I painted on steadily every minute.

Will you[2] not send me a word? Just think of our having William Hunt here, just shuddered back from the dreadful verge, so attenuated, so pathetic! He and his sister and his brother, and his man Carter, are all housed beneath

[1] To Feroline W. Fox. Shoals, September 10, 1878

[2] To Annie Fields. Shoals, July 19, 1879.

this cottage roof, and I hope and trust the air is going to do everything for him.

> "Fold him to rest, O pitying clime!
> Give back his wasted strength again."

Poor, dear fellow! there is nobody I pity so much. Mr. Thaxter is here, next door to his room; everybody is taking care of him, W. H. I mean. . . . I told him I wished he would consider my little den, my nook, my bower, this fresh and fragrant little parlor, as his own particular property, and he said, "You dear child! you don't know what a miserable, sick, weak, good-for-nothing I am, fit only for my bed." But he really is coming back to life, and eats and sleeps again, and yesterday rowed a little in the children's boat on the pond, and takes an interest in things, in the charming music of the band, etc. He was suffocating in that hot Weathersfield. I'm so glad he could get here.

What did the tornado do to you? Nothing, I hope. Naught to us. Mr. Thaxter was reading Agamemnon to a roomful here, when Zeus aloft began so fearfully to thunder we could n't hear him speak down here below.

Early boat whistles and I want to get this off.

Of the tragic end of William Hunt's life she wrote as follows: —

I found him. It was reserved for me, who loved him truly, that bitterness. All the island was seeking him. It was I who went to the brink of that lovely little lake, round which the wild roses have breathed and glowed all summer, and the little birds have come to drink and wash in the early morning light at its peaceful brim.

Let me begin. At breakfast he seemed bright as usual, then came a tremendous cloud, thunder, lightning, rain; it was so dark we had to light the gas. We went over to my fireside as soon as it ended. You know he lived in the room above the parlor where I used to be; that was his chamber. He sat by the fire with L. C. and me, talked a little, and then went out; was gone only a few minutes. But the lady whose room was behind the parlor said she saw him go up to the reservoir and stand on its stone edge and look into the water, and then toward the house, and then back to the water. At last he came back, past the window where I sat painting, and in again, and sat down on the sofa. "Oh, William," I said, "you are quite wet; don't go out again till it clears off; stay here by the fire." He stayed a few minutes:

he never stays anywhere longer, so restless; and then he went out of the door, and I never saw him again alive. He hated to be followed and watched. He begged us not, and we respected his wish, never *dreaming* of this possibility. Each of us thought him in a different place, and it was nearly two hours before we all, questioning each other in terror, realized he had not been seen by any one! Up on to that bright, sunny piazza of mine, where he had watched the flowers and heard the music all summer long, they laid his beautiful, dripping length, his gold watch-chain glittering, swinging. They tried to find some life; there was none. We took him in, put in blankets, rubbed and rubbed. It was mockery; he had been dead hours. Oh, how grand he looked when we laid him down and let him rest at last! Beautiful, dear fellow! we could not keep away from him; he was fascinating even in death, and we sat and gazed and gazed, and tried to believe it.

It is early.[1] No one is up. In this charming old town dear J. loves so much, the robins are calling from the elm-tree tops to one another. It is so still the sound reëchoes from street and square. A blithe cock crows. Opposite the

[1] To Annie Fields. Portsmouth.

windows of my room the ash-tree, whose scarlet berries pleased my sweet mother's fading eyes that sad autumn four years ago, is covered with knots of snowy bloom, like a bride. Ah me, this radiant, blooming, singing, shining world! what does it mean with its passion of grief at heart?

In the spring of the year 1880 the Thaxter family flitted away from Newtonville forever. The place was sold, and they took up their abode at Kittery Point, near Portsmouth, within sight of the Isles of Shoals.

There[1] is a whirlwind of business here. Would you mind if my gown hangs up in your closet a while longer?

The name of the place at Kittery is really Dartington. Sir Arthur Champernowne so called it, after his family place at home in England, on the banks of the river Dart.

Sir Arthur was a nephew of Sir Ferdinando Gorges, and came over here to look after his uncle's estates, settled there and called it Dartington; so we pick up the name and rechristen it, as we did Appledore. Rather a nice name, don't you think? It seems there were two brothers Champernowne, Sir Francis and Sir Arthur. It was Sir Francis who settled and

[1] To Annie Fields. Newtonville, April 4, 1880.

named the place, not Arthur, and Sir Francis who is buried there. Is n't it curious that the name Thaxter should appear in some of the old records of the Champernownes?

In the autumn of 1880 Celia Thaxter and her eldest brother sailed for Europe. They could only be absent from their respective responsibilities for a very brief period; but such vacation as they could allow themselves was rendered a necessity by Mr. Laighton's incidental illness. Even Mrs. Thaxter's keen senses were dazzled and fatigued by the rapid pace at which they whirled along through the wonders of the Old World. They traveled much too fast for genuine enjoyment; nevertheless she gathered, according to her wont, a large harvest of pleasant memories. Her first letter is from the ship: —

Here[1] we are, "midmost the beating of the steely sea," and such a time as we have had of it! For we ran the first night into a raging, roaring, ranting, tearing, dry easter. Rough? I believe you! My brother wanted "to see how she behaved in a storm." Well, he had his wish, and quite enough of it, without a moment's delay. Oh, she pitched like a maniac, and she

[1] To James and Annie Fields. October 8th, seventh day out.

rolled like a drunken elephant; at every plunge her propeller was bare to the blast, and made her shake and quiver like an aspen, or, better, like the variations on the violin in the Kreutzer sonata. My brother stormed up and down, like the jolly mariner he is, but I — I lay very low indeed, I assure you, and right quiet I kept, nor dared I move an eyelash for three days. Then I emerged, and Captain Morland tucked me under his arm and rushed me up and down the deck till I got used to its angle of forty-five degrees, and since then I stay on deck all the time. But it 's very nasty indeed. Yesterday the captain called the sailors to lash me and my chair to the iron railing under the lee of one of the life-boats, where they had rigged a canvas to keep off the flying water, and they lashed my bag to the chair, Jessie's chair this time, and I lay there, buffeted and banged by brother Boreas all day. Of all things I despise a wind, and we have had nothing else, and I 'm convinced there 's an unlimited supply where this comes from. The first six hours were heavenly calm. Two song sparrows followed the vessel till almost out of sight of land. One dear bird came and lit close to me on a rope, clinging with his slender feet, panting, as much as to say, "Really, I 'm all out of breath, but I had

to come after you, comrade, to say good-by." Was n't it sweet? I was so delighted. No other bird would have so moved me.

I hear the boisterous pipe. I am sure they are setting more sail: the ship does not seem quite so much as if she were trying to stand on her smokestack, and scrape the zenith with her keel, this morning.

Up on deck, noon. Oh the blasts and the flying foam! And they heave the log, and we are going thirteen knots an hour; and the hoary sea is a great, raging, roaring waste, water flying so that the captain had to come way aft here to my cubby-hole under the life-boat to "take the sun." Seven compasses on board this boat and a man at each; and the man at the wheel, his solemn, motionless, level eyelids are most impressive. He sees nothing but that compass night and day. Mr. F. says he has been over lots of times, and a more uncomfortable passage he never had, on account of the tremendous wind that will not cease a minute.

We [1] reached Liverpool Tuesday morning. Monday night (when we were to sight Fastnet Light) I was up at two o'clock. Pitch-dark of course,

[1] To Annie Fields. Red Horse Inn, Stratford on Avon, Friday, October 15, 1880.

but the boatswain was piping like a whole wood full of robins up on deck, and the mariners made night vocal with yo-ho-ing. Our means of light was shut and locked fast between our state-rooms, but I was n't born in Yankee land for nothing. I pushed up the ground-glass slide and scratched a contraband and surreptitious match, and, lo! an illumination. On deck it was black as Erebus, a vast chill, with a fresh wind *always* ahead. But we sat on the great metal sarcophagus covered with canvas (that the bath water is heated in) between the smokestack and the captain's cabin, with our feet over the cook's big range, where fires were still burning, and it was very comfortable, especially as they brought us hot coffee at once; and then we watched the rockets sent up from our ship and the answering signals from the invisible shore, and it was so nice to think how the telegram would directly speed across the world and you would all read, "The Batavia is in!" and think of us. Such a glorious dawn at last! such a heavenly sunrise and the Irish coast, divine in color and new, strange shapes; the hurrying sea, all peacock-blue and green; and the most extraordinary craft flying about with delicious dull-red sails that I sketched all day.

We went to St. George's Hall and to the

Art Exhibition, and that was very nice, for there were many charming pictures, and we sat and rested and looked at them. While we sat, about a hundred work-house children — girls — came up for a lark, and anything so sweet and quaint and clean and pretty I had never seen. Cheeks like carnations, and bright eyes and smooth shining hair, and the nicest little costume of dark blue, and each with a white straw bonnet of old-time shape, with dark-blue ribbon crossed over top and tied under chin, all alike, as if they had been turned out of a machine by the gross. I can't tell you how we enjoyed it. Then the good captain met us and took us down to Roby to dine with him, and was n't it just like a chapter out of Dickens, oh *my!* — "Rosina Cottage," just at the back of the station, all smothered in green things and full of yellow-haired children, papa's slippers warming before the fire, and an atmosphere of unmitigated loving-kindness pervading the whole place. Oh, how they worshiped each other! It was beautiful to see, and this poor man is dying to get away from the howling seas and stay with them for evermore. Heaven grant he may! Next morning was bright and sunny. We went up on the old Roman wall round the city, and oh, and oh, what a

morning we had! We loitered all round that wall, two miles, and every step was charming. The lookout, near and far, was so enchanting. You know it all, of course, but everything is so new to us, and every smallest detail, even to the shape and color of every brick, so different and strange. In the Phœnix tower a nice girl lay in wait for us with guidebooks and photographs. We took a guide and wandered away perfectly happy, studying as we went. Oh, what a splendid old people, fighting so hard for their lives, building like this, under every difficulty, such a defense! Oh, well, I might write all day of Chester wall, but I suppose there *is* something else in the world; we spent our whole time on it, and after we had taken a peep at the Cathedral it was high time for our dinner, for we started for Stratford at two; so we rushed, and *did n't enter Chester town at all!* But we saw enough to stay with us all our lives. We must allow more time for places in future. Our journey here was one series of pleasures. When we got to Wolverton we said, "This must be Birmingham," for we thought there could n't be more smoke; but Bloomsbury was thicker yet; and when we arrived at Birmingham Oscar said, "This is surely h—— itself!" and it did look like it.

Smoke and flame everywhere and the blackness of darkness. We changed there, waiting twenty minutes. I won't go into waiting-rooms, but sit with Oscar on the broad benches outside *to see*, and oh the fun! I can't tell you, dear James and dear Annie, how hopelessly in love I am with the English girls. Oh, their sweet seriousness, their dove-like eyes, their lovely contours, their fresh, delicious color, their smiling mouths, with such grave and noble curves, their modest mien, and flocks of them everywhere, a feast to the eyes, a refreshment to the soul! It is worth coming to England only to see them. At Stratford it was dark; we got into the Red Horse coach, and an old duffer beside got in, and presently he put his head out of window and growled, "Haw! Now then! Are yer comin'? Come on, then! Ye *al*ways let the Shakespeare 'bus go first." "Comin', comin', sir," said the struggling driver, wrestling with his packages (not ours). Oscar and I nearly went off again, nudging each other in the dark. That English growl, it was too funny. As for the Red Horse Inn, it is too charming to be believed. We had our supper in a cozy coffee-room by ourselves.

Gold carnations! Yes, just as true as you [1] live, cloth-of-gold carnations! I saw them heaped in a shop window; the color of those great gold roses at home (Marshal — what do you call them?). With these eyes I saw them just now!

Oh this place! it is so charming! One eternal and chronic Italian opera all day and all night. Such great basses and tenors superbly sounding through the night; such flashing dark eyes and midnight hair; and men of all sorts and sizes, all wearing long cloaks with one end cast over the shoulder with a grace which is indescribable; and women wearing over the head a square of black lace, one corner gathered over the head, the rest falling over the shoulders and down the back — oh, so lovely! Every woman wears this headgear, of poorer or richer materials, and to the older and more scraggy it gives a kind of dignity and grace; but on the young and fair, ye gods! how beautiful it is! Oh, the sights in the streets! how fascinating! Last night we went out, soon after we arrived, into the splendid arcade through the square, where the colossal statue of Leonardo da Vinci loomed white in the moonlight, with the four pupils at the corners of the lofty pedestal. Through the wonderful arcade

[1] To Annie Fields. Milan, November 14, 1880.

we passed, — it was all glittering with shops and royal stuffs and jewels, — and out into the square beyond, where the cathedral lifted its forest of white marble spires, like frostwork, to the moon; wonderful, wonderful! This morning we climbed up and out on its roof in the midst of those exquisite spires, each with its statue atop. The city lay half in soft haze below, half revealed — a lovely picture. This afternoon we went to a great performance in the cathedral. The immense interior was filled with a great multitude. There were clouds of incense, and cords of golden crosses and tons of candles flaring. The long procession moved round the church among the people with singing, chanting, and organ-playing. I saw a priest the living image of John G. Whittier, and a younger one who looked like my Roland. But a great many of them were very piggy indeed. Oh, their laces, their silks, their gold and silver and precious stones, their bowing and courtesying, how tedious! how like the dancing of the common Lancers of our country! But the people! Oh, the pathos of it all! Every face a study! Such devotion, such love and sorrow and fearful hope! In all the service in England and everywhere there is but one cry to which my heart responds. It seems the one significant

utterance. It is, "Lord have mercy upon us," helpless and defenseless that we are. It seems to me the whole thing might be simplified into that one cry.

Venice, 16th November. I wish you were here to tell me whether or no I 've got to heaven before my time! Last night, in a wonder of white moonlight, we glided into this marvel of the world. Out of the dark railroad station we emerged into the moonlight, on the stone steps where the gondolas were drawn up black against the quay. We were put on board one of these curious, charming things, and waited while our baggage was hunted up. The cushioned seats were delightful after the rush and jar of the railroad car, the long-continued rattle of the express train. How delicious it was, — the rest and quiet, the balmy air, the salt odors, the sheen of moonlight on the glassy tide, the hundreds of lamps reflected from houses, gondolas, all kinds of craft, the delicious language in which the boatmen talked and called to each other!

If you see Hamilton Wilde, do tell him what pleasure I have had in meeting some friends of his here, Mr. and Mrs. John Field. They happened to see a letter addressed to me, and when we arrived Mr. Field came and spoke to me, and it has been a real pleasure. Please

give my kind regards to H. W., if you see him, and tell him Mrs. Field plays Beethoven over my head like an angel. My room, — the only one to be had, did I tell you? — is over the Grand Canal. Such a room! vast, with frescoes and carvings, and only seven mirrors, dear, that 's all, and two white marble balconies, and four great doors beside the proper one for human nature's daily use, and Heaven knows what, in it. I 'm almost afraid of it when I think what has gone on here. Oh, if only there were such a thing as *time* in this world! Here are fourteen letters in my last budget waiting to be answered; and here is all heaven outside the windows, and it 's just after sunset, and a man's voice — tenor, fine, clear, sweet, sonorous — is thrilling the beautiful dusk, heavens! as if he were Love himself and Venus were lending her ear from Olympus. He has got a guitar, and how can I collect my wits enough to tell you anything! What have we done? Why, the Palace of the Doges first, and it pretty nearly finished *me*. We went into the dungeons over the Bridge of Sighs. They left us in the dark a moment in the cell where Byron stayed twelve hours. We saw the fixtures left in the walls outside in the passage for strangling, and the guillotine, and three round

holes in the floor for the red current to lose itself and disappear. Bismilleh! It was horrible! This after the splendors of the palace! Oh, St. Mark's! The marbles, the alabaster, the mosaics, the carvings! No wonder Ruskin went stark, staring mad! For me, I can't tear my eyes away from the pavements long enough to get at the paintings and the incredible ceilings, to say nothing of what lies between. We went to the tip-top of the Campanile, nothing short of it. A man on horseback can ride to the top, the ascent is so easy. Napoleon the First did so. There are no stairs. But, dear me, you know all these things; why waste I my fruitless breath? Oh, the shops, the jewels, the glass, the work in gold and silver, the photographs! We went to the Palazzo Giovenelli today; that was a palace! The prince and potentate who owns it was living there, but they let us see it. Talk about the Arabian Nights! Aladdin's palace was a woodshed. And *such* pictures, O ye gods! Titian, and Paul Veronese, and Tintoret, and Salvator Rosa, lots besides. Oh, the walls, ceilings, floors of delicious marble mosaics, the superb upholstery! What 's the use! I give it up. We went down to the shores of the open Adriatic and picked up shells; they were delicate and exquisite. We

floated in the gondola when we came back up and down the Grand Canal in the sunset, half a mile beyond the Rialto and past such palaces! Oh, the "stones of Venice" in the façades of these palaces centuries old, the beautiful colored marbles set in the white, still precious in color! Annie, the water is peacock-blue or green the livelong time; and as for the sails, they are color gone mad! Such old gold, and tawny richness of red and orange, and their shapes! Indescribable! The gondolas are the most elegant things; their shape, their uniform black, set off with the glittering brass sea-horses or dragons, polished like glass on the gunwale each side. The carving and brass work on some of them is very rich. And the men who engineer them with such grace and dexterity, so that they glide like magic in the narrowest watery ways, no matter how crowded, these men are so picturesque! some bit of bright color about them almost always, red or orange or blue; and such shapes of caps! and such eyes under! and such hair! Well, what *is* the use! This afternoon we saw Titian's dear little virgin in a blue gown going up the steps, with the priests standing above her and the people below. What a *dear!* Do you know, I am so impressed with pictures and busts

of Titian, though taken at a great age (think of his living to be ninety-nine and *then* dying of the plague!), they are so like William Hunt.

We[1] do so rush I *can't* get time to write, and I get so tired that it is seldom I can write at five o'clock in the morning, as I am doing now. But it 's my only chance. Have you been here? I have forgotten. God made it the divinest place. Men have converted it into a pigsty of unspeakable squalor. The best thing that could happen to it would be to have Vesuvius roll a league or so of red-hot lava over it and sweep away or bury it deep, like Herculaneum and Pompeii, and *end* it some way. North Street in Boston is clean and sweet and wholesome to it. It is n't one street, it is the whole great swarming town. We ride through miles of it to get to any place. Up on the heights are palaces and fine houses, and an approximately clean street, where carriages and toilettes rival the Champs Elysées, but, ye gods! the whole town along the sea border! No drainage, everything in the streets; no windows to the houses; no human creatures who ever combed their hair or washed their faces since they were born; ten thousand

[1] To Annie Fields. Naples, December 8, 1880.

million billion filthy babies! There is not a ray of joy or decency in the place; the only cheerful element in Naples is the all-pervading flea! King Humbert and Margherita are in their yellow-pink palace. Great Heaven! can they not find some way to turn the whole Mediterranean in on their nasty city! Oh well, enough! Pardon!

Our hotel is high up above the smells. Before us lies Capri, melting in sapphire and amethyst. The Mediterranean is wondrous; it is like the Arabian Nights. Tongue can't tell its color, — its greens, blues, purples, its lambent light. It 's not like water; it 's like leaping, liquid, prismatic flame all about its delicious islands. Its very substance is colored, as if you dripped the fine brilliant blue color we have for washing clothes, you know, into a cup of water; it does n't owe alone its marvelous effects to reflections from the sky. We see Vesuvius smoking away, the broad, red-hot band of lava down its black side. Just this moment it is splendid, its great dark mass heaved high against the crystal-pure sunrise sky; not a cloud in the whole heaven except the mountain's own long, floating plume that trails across the sky from east to west, and catches all the faint rose-tints of the coming

sun. It is so beautiful! From whence did I write last, dear friend? Ah me, I am in such a rush, as if I were tangled in the tail of a comet! I can't remember.

Then we came to Rome. Oh, but going to Florence I saw the first stone-pine and the first olive trees; how beautiful they are! Stone-pine, olive, cypress, each one is a poem. Oh, the Campagna! If I had time to talk! But the daisies! I thought of you every minute. The first day of December I gathered violets, and I went to the grave of Keats. I can't tell you with what a feeling I dropped over the ashes of his heart the most perfect rose it has ever been my lot to behold, one from Vedder's bouquet, every flower of which an artist's eye selected. I send you a violet leaf I gathered from that little lonely grave, and a rose leaf from Shelley's, not far away. I scattered some daisies over Shelley's. Some one had been before me to both places, and a spike of clustered, fragrant narcissus flowers, waxen white, was dying on each grave.

Well, we came here on Thursday. Friday we spent the whole day in Pompeii, that is, it took us the whole day to drive there through Portici and Resina, and go through the only half-unburied city and back at six in evening. It

was breathlessly interesting; excavations still going on; something new revealed every moment. We watched them digging. Oh for *time* to tell! Saturday we went to Baiæ, through Posilippo and Pozzuoli. No end of Roman ruins and Greek traces, the vast remains of an ancient city all along the coast.

Alas, here comes the sun! I must stop. Sunday we went to top of Vesuvius, and burned our shoes on the hot lava; Monday to Capri; yesterday to Herculaneum, and to the most marvelous, exquisite aquariums here on the Mediterranean border. Oh, such dreams of beauty! Such colors and delicate shapes of weed, coral, anemone, and myriad undreamed-of things! and fearful octopus swimming about, the most dreadful creature I have ever seen. To-day we go to the Museum. They say it needs a week; all the treasures of Pompeii and Herculaneum. To-morrow back to Rome. In Florence I moused till I found your Dante's fresco on the wall, and brought away a photo of it. Saw "Sasso di Dante" in the square, written on the wall below which the small iron bench used to be, where he liked to sit, near Giotto's lovely Campanile; saw his house with the sweet inscription over the door. Went all over Michael Angelo's house; oh, was n't that in-

teresting! Saw his old paint brushes, writing desk, sword, plans of St. Peter's, etc., manuscripts, etc.

Mrs. Thaxter's letter from Genoa was one of the most delightful of the series. It was written on Christmas Eve, when, after describing her visits to the palaces and her unspeakable pleasure in their beauty and their pictures, she continues with a detailed description of three visits upon three successive days to the Villa Novello, where Mrs. Cowden Clarke, Miss Novello, and their brother received her with open arms and with their accustomed hospitality.

The carriage-way [of the Villa Novello at Christmas] was edged with roses. . . . I entered a lovely hall with Pompeiian frescoes on the wall and a floor of mosaic; the butler showed me upstairs through a kind of picture gallery and opened the door of the music room. There they all were and came forward to greet me. They were playing at two grand pianos, so I begged them to go on (Mrs. Clarke's two nieces at one piano, Miss Novello and the maestro at another). They played the Italian symphony of Mendelssohn. As I sat and listened I had an opportunity of taking in the room and its details. In the first place it fronted the whole

magnificent Mediterranean and it was light and lofty, and the windows each one immense plate of flawless crystal from the ceiling to the floor; it was as if it were open on the side toward the sea. I could hardly believe there was anything between us and the outer air. Walls and ceiling were decorated with fresh and delicate frescoes, with a light arabesque of gold running gracefully about among the flowers and figures and landscapes; the whole room was what you would expect, tasteful and charming. After the music was done the maestro departed, and then we had a long talk. After sunset we all went into the dining-room, because it was warmer, — a lovely, pleasant room. Oh, the flowers! Oh, the roses! Bella Madonna! who shall tell? With all outdoors gone mad with flowers, you can imagine how it might look within. After dinner, which was so gay, we went into Mrs. Clarke's library, and by the open fire talked and told stories! Could I but tell you about Mrs. Clarke's cap. Such a mesh of cobweb lace, — frostwork caught and fixed, — a little satin rosette like a flower!

Directly after Christmas the brother and sister took up their rapid flight homeward.

Lyons. Friday morning in a gray glimmer. Oh, the unaccustomed pinch of the cold this

morning! The first thing I see out of the window is a string of horses, with all their tails done up in incorrigible hard knots, dragging cartloads of ice in blocks. Everybody blows his or her fingers, or crams hands in pockets or muffs; everybody is hooded, cloaked, shrouded, shivering. Clearly we have come the wrong way! Dear me, the street is so interesting! I have dragged my table close to the window; there is hardly light enough to paint yet. I have a bunch of anemones I 've brought all the way from Nice, from pillar to post, with their stems in a bottle of water, trying to paint them carefully, faithfully, lovingly. But, Lord bless you, there is no time and no light! However, I 'm going to do it all the same; have it half done. I suppose after breakfast we shall, as Carl Weiss says, "take a little keb" (which means an open carriage really) and go round to see the town, and try to see silk manufactories and such. Oh, I 'm so sorry to miss Björnson! more than Bernhardt. If there is anything I love it 's Arne. Do give my love to dear Whittier if you see him. Say I wrote a long letter to him, and to Jenny Hunt; *pray* tell her, with my love, I did write to her; and say I shall see Mr. Dickinson in London if I 'm alive and he is. Had a note from Mrs.

D. a few days ago. O my darling, I 'm rushing against time and my flowers are fading!

Here[1] we are at last in this frozen Paris, where everybody has a red nose. Alas, to have left that golden Riviera for this arch enemy of a climate! When we left Nice we spent one day in Cannes, and went over to the Island of St. Marguerite and saw where Marshal Bazaine got over the wall, and the prison of the Iron Mask. Much I cared for all that! Down I sat upon a stone near the beach, and tried to sketch an old well with an ancient water jar on its broad stone edge, and a wall behind it over which the oranges hung their gold, and beyond, the soft, soft sky. Ah *that* sky and *this* sky! There 's a difference! The great carmine anemones I found at Cannes, and the rose-colored ones; and the armful of eucalyptus I bought for two sous from a pretty peasant girl sitting on a low wall by the roadside; and the field of peas in blossom, rich, royal purple — common peas such as we eat, clad like Solomon in all his glory! All along the Riviera we saw fields of them white with bloom; but purple ones, who ever heard of such a thing! Old Cannes

[1] To James and Annie Fields. Hotel de Normandy Paris, January 18, 1881.

was most quaint and charming, new Cannes full of lord-grand-high-nabob English. Alackaday, how sick the poor things were, many of them! From there we posted to Marseilles, and that *was* queer enough, older than old, brimful of interest, only there was n't time to half investigate it. The old and new harbors entertained my brother much, and me, too. We poked about along them a whole morning. The ships, from all lands and climes (packed like sardines side by side, with their bowsprits over the one long wharf that edged the border of the tideless sea), nearly pitched their cargoes out upon our heads over their bows as we threaded our devious way beneath. There were peanuts and palm nuts, and beans and coffee and cocoa and grain, and bales of mummy wraps to be made into "shoddy" (the mummies themselves being used to feed the engines on the railroad, my worshipful friends! Oh, have n't I got some tales, some "traveler's tales," to tell!). There was cotton seed, wherewith to adulterate the olive oil! We left Marseilles for Lyons on Thursday, the 13th, in the rain, and in seven hours we steamed from bloom and summer into frost and winter. Half way we lost the last dear stone-pines and precious olive trees; soon we saw thin ice and sprinkled snow; and by the time we reached Lyons and

the delightful little "Hotel de l'Univers" it was bitter, oh, bitter cold! We left there Friday morning, but first we saw the silk manufactories and a museum full of all sorts of wonderful things found in the Rhone and the Saône and in and about Lyons, — traces of the all-powerful Romans, and Etruscan ornaments, jewels, vases, statues, everything one sees from old tombs and palaces about Rome and Ostia and all those places; beautiful golden ornaments, like the Schliemann treasures of Troy, and oh, the slender finger-rings of gold! I can't tell you how they touch me, thinking of the hands that have slipped out of them ages ago! — how they were clasped in friendship, when hand met hand, those little rings, how many daily acts of life they shared. I am thinking of the women's rings especially; their name is legion: those that were found in Pompeii made me hold my breath. Oh, that wonderful Pompeii! Did I tell you at Rome of the lady next me at the table d'hôte to whom I talked of Pompeii, saying I wished I could only have stayed there as long as I wanted to. She opened her slightly supercilious English eyes with slow surprise, and with that most peculiar intonation, that slow drawl, that curiously aspirated sort of speech, "How extraordinary!" she breathed; "I found it *ex-*

tremely dull!" *Did* I tell you of the party of Americans from New York, traveling with a courier, we met at Naples, and afterwards at the Capitol at Rome again, and the lady came up to me and begged me to go with her to look at a certain statue near the entrance, which I did, and beheld a quite unusually developed Diana with bow and quiver, hound at knee, and crescent above brow, complete? "Our courier declares it is a statue of Julius Cæsar!" she said; "now *is* it?" "Well," I said, "if Cæsar had a figure like this, being a man, he was a phenomenon!" Then I saw that the pedestal of the statue had an inscription with something about Cæsar Imperator on it, but it was so absurd I nearly died of laughter on the spot. The lady's aggrieved expression was too funny — instead of telling the courier to go where the woodbine twineth, and using the modicum of brains wherewith a merciful Providence had furnished her!

Well, we left Lyons and went to Dijon, and it grew more bitterly cold all the time, and in that queer little town, at the Hotel de Jura, we had very cold noses indeed; and Sunday, in the morn, we started for Paris, and were all day getting here through a snowstorm, and I amused myself all the way writing some verses

for "St. Nicholas" (about a dear little old-fashioned girl I saw washing a window in Zürich town as we steamed out of it after two hours' stay), for the cars joggled too much to write letters, and I could n't see an earthly thing outside. Oh, I have not lost one fraction of a second of time since we landed on this side the world. But I have been whirled like a leaf in a hurricane almost all the time, so many intense impressions following so fast one upon another.

Evening, 18th. We have been out all day in this slippy, sloppy, slushy, sprinkling Paris, for a January thaw arrived last night and the eaves weep copiously on the heads of the populace, and the streets are swimming away, and it is one of those times that try women's souls because of their press of canvas that absorbs the wet, and they envy the lords of creation that walk skirtless over the mud. We tried to go to the Louvre, but bless you! it was n't open! For why? There had been a snowstorm, and everything in Paris stops short in a snowstorm. It was all we could do to get a "little keb," as Carl calls it, to bring us the ten thousand miles from the station here when we arrived Sunday night. Why could n't we go in and see the pictures? "Because they were cleaning the snow off the roof of the build-

ing"!!!! How supernatural! That is the idiotic way they go on, this side of the world. The Shoalers would say, "I guess they are some fullish" (foolish).

Dear friends, I do long to see you, but I'm awfully sorry to be going home, and dread this hideous winter passage before us, because I had enough coming over, and it will be ten thousand times worse going back. It is nine o'clock, and the Rue St. Honoré beneath my windows is roaring as if it were midday. I'm tired and chill and must creep to bed. My brother has gone to some theatre with Carl. The open fire simmers, but it does n't warm this refrigerator of a room. Ah me! The Riviera di Ponenti, Monaco, with its walls solid purple masses of heliotrope and passion flower, or pink with roses, and all its rare blooms, and its palms and cactus, and aloe and olive! Oh dear, I wish I were a lord grand high nabob! You 'd never see me more! But I'm only a poor little pauper with a cold nose, so I must go home. Pardon my levity. Paris has got into my head. I love you better than the heliotrope, after all.

Oh,[1] if we could only have stayed in those hea-

[1] London, January 27, 1881.

venly places till it moderated up here in the north! Mr. Conway came in a carriage for me last night and took me to see Ellen Terry and Irving in Tennyson's "Cup" and "The Corsican Brothers." She is *divine!* I saved myself up all day, and went at the risk of my life almost, for the weather is deadly, but I would not have missed it for anything. I know you 'll be glad I saw Ellen Terry and Irving, and that 's mostly why I write just this scrawl to send with the playbill. Such a vision! Wait till I can tell you!

In February Mrs. Thaxter returned with renewed spirit and vigor to the old surroundings.

I send you[1] a little poem, you beautiful, dear woman! You never gave me a moment's pain in all the ten years I have known you. How dear you are, and lovely and good! Nobody knows it better than I.

I have some news to tell you. Don't whisper it aloud, but the woman I brought down last seems to be, in the language of the vulgar, a trump. I hardly dare to think she is so good as she seems. She flies like a whirlwind, without a bit of noise, and work disappears before her like corn in a gristmill, and all is

[1] To Mrs. Julius Eichberg. Kittery Point, October 23, 1881.

done well. She comes up the cellar stairs as if she were fired out of a gun, only noiselessly.

She is so grateful and anxious to please I am quite scared, and she says the place looks just like the island she came from, and she isn't afraid of being lonesome. Ye gods! can it be that at last my long lane has found a turning? Scarce can I believe it.

Your[1] dear note last night. Thanks and thanks. A year ago at this time we were asleep in Frankfurt. I can't tell you with what a wistful delight I remember and recall, day by day and hour by hour, our whereabouts last year at this time; though I was so perplexed and wretched, still the memory of all I saw and heard and felt — all that is priceless. I am writing by the kitchen fire; it is but half past five A. M., but Mr. Thaxter did not get off yesterday, and makes an early start to-day. A—— has gone to "brush up" the dining-room and lay the table. The dim sky is growing lighter outside, the kettle sings over the fire, the breakfast cooks, and I scribble a little line to you.

Yesterday I was able to paint an olive pitcher for Mr. Ware, and he sent me such a beautiful inscription in Greek to put on it, and that made me think of you.

[1] To Annie Fields. Farm, November 2, 1881.

ΑΕΙΝ · ΟΡΩΝ · ΚΥΚΛΟΣ ·
ΛΕΥΣΣΕΙ · ΝΙΝ · ΜΟΡΙΟΥ · ΔΙΟΣ ·
ΧΛ · ΓΛΑΥΚΩΠΙΣ · ΑΘΑΝΑ ·

I copied from memory, so pardon the mess I made of it. Do you know what it means? That my olive trees are the special care of Zeus, "watched by the eye of olive-guarding Jove and by gray-eyed Athenæ." Is n't it charming? and won't Alice Howe like it on her bowl? Mr. Thaxter and Roland hunted up the ancient Greek letters for me (the quotation comes from Œdipus Colonos). Mr. Ware only sent them in the modern Greek small letters. This is the way the inscription was written in the Cumæan Sibyl's Cave, in these beautiful ancient characters.

I[1] thought, when everybody went away out of the house, "Now, like the witches in Macbeth, 'I 'll do, I 'll do, I 'll do!'" and I wish I could show you what I have done, and how pleasant and comfortable — nay, charming — it looks. I have re-covered the couch with nice brown cotton flannel so there 's not a wrinkle anywhere, and it looks fine as brown satin; and I have covered the old handsome armchair I

[1] To Annie Fields. Kittery Point, Monday morning, November 21, 1881.

bought in Portsmouth with gold and black cover, and put brass nails round the edges. *What* a job! but it fits like a Paris glove, cushion and all. And I made, of old-gold-colored, soft, thick cotton flannel, six curtains for these windows, and put a band of brown nearly a foot wide at top and bottom, and they *are* so handsome! I thought of you all the time I was making them. I had no sewing-machine, so it took longer. I sewed seventeen rings on each curtain, and Karl helped me fit the big brass wires I had got for the top; they slip like magic, and shut out the howling sea and winter weather with a beautiful barricade of comfort.

Then the pillows, cushions for chairs and sofas, and all kinds of things I have covered, and every bit of brass and metal in the house glitters like gold and silver, and all the windows crystal clear, and paint clean and everything in order. The curtains, etc., are a surprise for the boys when they come, day after to-morrow, for Thanksgiving. And now I am going to make pumpkin pies and mince, and see to my Thanksgiving plum pudding this morning. Don't *tell* of my "doings," dearest Annie! Here peeps the sun above the ocean's rim, and a golden glory for a moment with him. And here is breakfast, too, which Annie Colman brings with such glad and eager service.

Yesterday, while I was writing the last words of the letter I sent to you,[1] I perceived smoke in the air, and looking up, Annie, the smoke was pouring up the *whole length of the crack* in the floor next the fireplace behind me!!! I ran upstairs to John's room; he rushed down half dressed: the cellar was full of smoke! In a moment all the half-dressed men were on the scene. Wentworth fortunately had not yet finished his work at the barn and gone home, and with lightning speed every bit of fire was carried out into the snow, and he was dislodging the bricks in the hearth, and the smoke followed. Then it was water, water, and finally, after working about an hour, they thought it was out, and we sat down to breakfast. But I was n't satisfied and I kept saying, "I expect every minute we shall break out into a light blaze." But they laughed at my fears. Suddenly we all became conscious of more smoke. They ran to the top of the house; the smoke was coming out in the attic!!! When I heard that I thought we were gone, and went quickly into my room and put my mother's little jewel treasures in my pocket, tried to think what I would like to save most, and swiftly rushed back. They had torn the whole brickwork

[1] To Annie Fields. Kittery, November 25, 1881.

out by that time, and what do you think! they found *the bricks had been laid on wooden beams!!!* and the beams cut down like bread before the axe, a mass of soft, hot charcoal! Just think of the man that built that chimney! Well, we got it out at last, and, thank God, it was only smoke, not yet flame, that had gone up through the partition to the attic. But it was the narrowest kind of an escape. All day long they were at work taking out the whole of the hearth, so that the cellar was laid bare to view, and it is to be laid, as it should have been at first, in solid stone. The mason who built it had the pleasure of spending his Thanksgiving digging out his wicked, shiftless work. It is the greatest wonder on earth that we are not in ashes this moment.

I[1] am so struck with the flowers along our way, though we rush so fast! Just now we passed a brook edged with golden senecio, do you know it? growing just like purple asters, only bright gold, in cluster; blue iris grows with it. The meadow-rue is in lovely mist all over the low places. We pass so many kinds of loosestrife, I'm going to set them down, "for fun," as Sarah Jewett would say, as I see

[1] To Annie Fields. Monday A. M. on train.

them: daisies, St. John's wort (blooming), toad-flax, white spiræa, princes' feather, roses, buttercups, white early aster, mustard, tansy, milkweed, yarrow, clover, fireweed (rosy purple), arethusa, rudbeckia, wild parsley, scarlet wood lilies, oh, so superb! arrow-head (white) cymbidium, morning-glory, and golden gorse (only a rare glimpse of this), white elder clusters, pink meadow-sweet, gold mullein spikes, pale primrose, blue-eyed grass (now we run into the rain! Oh, I hope your hillside has it!), water lilies (white and yellow), laurel, thistle, blackberry (still blooming), Gill-go-over-the-ground, and crowfoot; going through a wood, a glimpse of white azalea. What a wilderness of bloom! And now we near Greenland, and it does n't seem five minutes since we ran out of the dark station at Beverly. And here is pink germander! Dear, let me hear from you soon. I had such a happy time with you!

At the Shoals. This morning, a little after three, I was wakened by the distressed cry of a sandpiper. I knew the dear creatures had a nest near the reservoir, towards which and over which one of my windows looks. I sprang up and looked out. Sure enough, round the brick parapet was stealing a hideous three-legged cat, who

got here nobody knows how, and has grown wild and a terror to the birds, and we can't catch her. I saw the sandpipers flitting and piping. Everything was rosy with dawn and the sea a mirror. I threw on my dressing gown, and, not stopping even for stockings, slipped on my shoes, down stairs and out of the house, round the piazza, up through the green space and clustering rose and bayberry bushes, over the low fence, on to the broad, low wall of the reservoir, round which I ran at the edge of the still water to the ledges on the other side, where the tragedy was going on. I scared away the cat, and the wise sandpipers stood watching on the highest part of the rock and ceased their shrieks of terror, and peace descended upon the scene. The sun was yet some time below the horizon, but such a rosy world! It was heavenly, the delicate sweet air, the profound stillness, the delicious color. I quite forgot I was nearly fifty-one, and why I did n't get my death of cold the Lord he knows, *I* don't!

Oh, my dear,[1] my *dear!* Never have I seen such roses! Where did they grow, in what garden of Paradise? Such sumptuousness! I am like Portia's lover, you have bereft me of

[1] To Mrs. Lang. March 18, 1882.

all words. I cannot keep my eyes away from this heavenliness, and as for thanking you, if you 'll show me how, I shall be glad. And your kindness to my boy! He is so moved and pleased, and sat up beaming over Rosamond's photograph last night till it was a pleasure to see him, and so delighted with the other pictures, too; but he will write and speak for himself. I was out when your delicious gift arrived, but he knew exactly what to do, and let each superb rose softly down into a great bowl of water till every cheek touched the coolness, and they were perfect when I came in at six o'clock, and this morning they are just as fresh as yesterday.

This chilly sheet of paper seemed so little to send you in return for all this glowing bloom and perfume.

How[1] near the time comes! I am so sorry I can't stand on the wharf and wave to you and Sarah to the last glimmering speck. Strange to say, I like to do this thing, like to hold on to my loves as long as light will let me, till distance devours them from me. I had a letter from Mr. Whittier; he says he is coming here in June, or first July. But, dear me, I

[1] To Annie Fields. Shoals, May 18, 1882.

think there will never be any summer! something is the matter with the world and the weather; the bitter east never ceases blowing, and the sun won't shine. Our gardens are blighted with frost, Julia's and mine. She sent to Vick (and now Vick is dead, too!) and got roses and lilies and daffydowndillies. Her garden is full, — but, deary me! not a blink of warmth or sun! But she 's so happy she needs no sun, though her plants do. It was really bright yesterday, though so cold. At night a wondrous flaming sunset, but the robin sang of rain all day. I never saw the coast so clear in all my life. We saw the White Mountains, Washington and Jefferson, *and saw the buildings* on the top of Mount Washington with a glass! That is something I never expected to see! We could hardly believe our eyes. I wonder what convulsion of nature will transpire! This morning it is black and bitter as December.

This morning,[1] at four o'clock, Mr. Thaxter knocked at my door and asked me if I did not wish to look at the comet. I went to the window, and such a supremely beautiful and wonderful sight met my eyes that I thought of you

[1] To Julius Eichberg. Kittery Point, October 4, 1882.

at once, and your interest in the starry heavens. The east was a little red at the horizon, and through the morning twilight, steering headlong toward the sun, was this magnificent, mystic object, a round glowing orb, with a tremendous sweeping tail, taking up at least one third of the space of sky in the view. The sea was glassy calm; there was not a breath of wind or a whisper of water, nothing but the stillness and this stupendous object. Really I can find no other word for it; it is immense, and strikes you with awe in spite of yourself, beside being so beautiful, so wonderful, it makes you hold your breath. I would give anything if you could see it, and I think you might, and that is why I write. From your bedroom window, somewhere about four o'clock in the morning, if you look out, I think it would be near the tall church tower to the right, in the southeast. It is steering straight toward the sun. It seems a shame to miss such a sight, which cannot occur more than once in a lifetime. Do try to see it! I never imagined anything half so splendid.

I was so glad to hear from you [1] once more! And so delighted to have the extract from Mo-

[1] To Mrs. Ole Bull. 47 State Street, Portsmouth.

hini's letter, — you were so good to copy it for us.

You ask about the picture; it was taken by a Miss Richards, of Boston. There was a poor girl, who had long been stemming bravely the adverse currents of life, and who was just in danger of going under from protracted ill health brought on by hard work of supporting her mother and herself. I was *so* anxious to help her, but I never have any money. I was telling Miss Richards about her, and she said, "If you will give *yourself* I will give my work, and we can do something for her." I turned it over in my mind a little, for I did n't fancy lying round on counters, but I did n't hesitate long when I thought of this great need and the opportunity; so it was done, and we raised nearly two hundred dollars for the poor thing, and she has gone to the Azores, hoping to get well! Is n't it beautiful to think we could? And the pictures are still selling for her help and comfort at Williams & Everett's now.

I[1] have had a lovely, hard-working spring, out of doors all day doing the things I love best to do, and sleeping soundly at night, and better in body than for years, for which I am most

[1] To Annie Fields. Shoals, June 8, 1884.

grateful. The dear seeds you sent I am eagerly watching for. I planted them at once. The slugs plague me sadly still, and my magnificent hollyhocks, scores and scores of them, are seized by the hollyhock pest, which came over from England after laying almost all the family low over there, and how *does* it get here to my island! It spreads on the under side of the big, broad leaves a yellow crust, beginning with small yellow spots, a fungus, not an insect, and there 's an end of the plant; it covers *all* of it, stems and all, and devours its life. I wonder if it has reached you. The birds and slugs have fairly beaten me on mignonette this year. I have planted a whole solid *ounce*, and what the birds left the slugs devoured the moment it lifted its head above the ground. And I fear the carnation enemy will cut me off from pinks. My carnations warn me he has come; and for the poor little margarets, I know they won't leave me a plant; they did n't last year. If they only will spare the rose campion bed! it grows with the same habit as pinks; and yesterday I found one stalk pierced its whole length with the wriggling worm. It is detestable! But oh, my larkspurs and lilies! such masses of rich, green, strong growth! As yet, nothing has meddled with *them*, but I hardly dare breathe

as much aloud! Not a sunflower will birds and slugs allow me. I have planted *pints* of seeds, and not an aster of the *hundreds* of fine plants I have set out from boxes but the slugs have gobbled. To keep them, I put a little pot upside down over each, and often when I lift the pot there is nothing underneath *but a slug!* the whole green plant vanished, though I have ground the pot deep into the earth to prevent his getting in. But the sturdy poppies are simply glorious in their growth.

I am dreading *people*, after all this peace, and old clothes, and informal existence.

I wish summer could go on all through thus peacefully.

When I saw you[1] yesterday afternoon, and you showed me the bits you had copied from the birthday books, I thought of these sonnets of Shakespeare, the most consummate expressions of human feeling in existence, and thought I would copy them for you; the more you read them, the more beautiful you will find them. But I dare say you know them all, though how few people do! I found it hard to choose among them, they are so varied and so wonderful; if you know them, perhaps you remember this one: —

[1] To Ross Turner. March 12.

"Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?"

How beautiful it is! And this one: —

"If the dull substance of my flesh were thought,"

And again: —

"Blessed are you, whose worthiness gives scope,"

And —

"Then give me welcome," etc.

Oh, there is no end to them and the beauty of them. But I dare say you know them. No one yet was ever known to tire of them, however, any more than one can tire of nature.

Celia Thaxter's life was one in which the soul's development may truly be said to have been made evident. The eagerness with which she called others to her side, in moments of exceptional experience, was peculiar to herself. She did not need to study the Scripture words, that no man liveth to himself and no man dieth to himself; her blessings were her neighbors' blessings, and her sorrows became a source of light to others, as well as to her own heart.

It seemed as if the new awakening of her spirit to a conscious sense of its own independent, disengaged existence came while listening to the music of Beethoven. Day after day Mr. Paine delighted to play for her and was eager to forerun her wish to hear. During

the long summer mornings he would repeat her favorite sonatas (109 and 110), and her expressions of gratitude to him and to Mr. Eichberg are more touching than ever before. Up to this moment of her life she seems to have considered herself a striving, struggling, sorrowing, and oftentimes rebellious, atom; one knowing only its own fatuousness and its own power of suffering: deeper, however, hidden in a half-recognized consciousness, she was always able to find in the heart of nature the same response which she had felt as a little child; but her half-awakened self was a mist-driven creature longing for the light. This light she found in listening to Beethoven, and from that moment music was more than ever a great factor in her existence.

Soon after this awakening to music, perhaps in the following year, the first intimations of a possible communication between the spirits of this world and those in the world of the unseen were aroused in her. The intense excitement she experienced made it impossible to distinguish between things true and false; indeed, she seemed to make no effort, but was exalted by every breath which came to her. At last she was rudely

awakened to the untruth of some of the "mediums." Nevertheless she clung to her faith in the possibility of communication with the unseen, and found great comfort in it. Later, theosophy attracted her, especially as taught by Mohini. For the first time the world of the Orient was opened, and the vastness of this rolling sphere, as seen by the light of Eastern religion, absorbed her imagination. She saw the Divine life pouring light upon the children of men in the far dawn of time when the western world was in a sense non-existent. The truth came to her in a garment of living poetry which Mohini interpreted. He also urged the necessity of putting aside the "manifestations of spirits," the seeking of which he considered dangerous folly. He showed how the older religion was allied to the teaching of Christ, and gave her a copy of the New Testament for her study and her guide. From that moment her relation to the things of this world became quite changed. In the letters that follow we shall discern a spirit different and calmer, — the spirit of one who has found a key into the central chamber we call Peace.

All[1] my life I have wondered at myself, of

[1] To John G. Whittier.

what my pen wrote of itself of piety and moral feeling. Now I thank God that in me lay the religious sense ready for awakening, the spiritual perception, the capacity to perceive the truth in the Scriptures. "They take up a man where he is, and leave him on a higher plane, every time he studies them." "As soon as one knows the truth, then nothing else is necessary. Totally against all the world can bring, the man says, I stand upon the truth. How much it takes away from the load of trouble! Like water under the keel of a ship it (trouble) comes and goes; we do not mind it more. Truth gives this power. This is the test of truth within a man." So, dear friend, I am become a most humble and devoted follower of Christ, our Christ, for all races have their own Christs to save and help them, one being especially sent for us, "to call sinners to repentance and not the righteous." I understand it all now, and feel as if all my life I had been looking through a window black with smoke; suddenly it is cleared, and I see a dazzling prospect, a glorious hope! There are two elements which Mohini brings which make clear the scheme of things: one is the law of incarnation, the rebirths upon this earth, in which all the Eastern nations believe as a matter of course,

and to which our Christ refers in one or two of the gospels; and the other, the law of cause and effect, called Karma, the results of lives in the past. When salvation is spoken of, it always means the being saved from further earthly lives, and of reaching God and the supreme of joy, the continual wheel of rebirth and pain and death being the hell, the fire of passions that burns forever, the worm of desires that never die. . . . I saw lovely Rachel Howland at the women's prison, where I went to read to three hundred convicts. We spoke of you, and she asked me, when I should write, to remember her to you. She put on my head one of the Friends' caps, a real one, which she took off her own head, the loveliest thing! I wish I could wear it always.

How fares it with you?[1] When I first heard of your pain, I thought to write to you at once, but I reflected and said to myself, "Better wait a little till the sore heart can bear a word or touch," for I think at first one longs to be left in peace: all words, however kind, are so futile; they cannot alter the tremendous fact which overwhelms us.

To me, death is no longer dreadful; for me it

[1] To Feroline W. Fox. Shoals, June 5, 1885.

has lost all its terrors; it is only a brief pain of separation from our beloved; we miss them, that is all, but oh how hard it is to miss them! I know it all. It has grown to be no more to me than when my friend crosses the ocean to the other hemisphere. I miss him dreadfully, the days seem long till the sweet time when I shall again see him; but I know he is there, and never forgets me any more than I forget him, and that presently I shall join him, — the longest time is brief: and it is said in that beautiful new life our darlings have begun, there is no time, the word means nothing to them any longer. I went to a wedding the other day, the wedding of my dear Ignatius Grossman with Edwina Booth. Such radiant happiness I have never seen. I rejoiced with them, with the dear fellow who was like a son to me. A few days later I went to the funeral of a dear friend, Mr. Robert Darrah. That funeral gave me more happiness than the wedding had done. I looked down at the cloak of a body he had thrown off, the well-used garment he had worn so many years, and which had served him well, but which he no longer needed, and my heart was light with joy. I was so fond of him I could only rejoice with my whole soul for him; for I knew he

was safe with his dear ones, unfettered, untrammeled, happy, and that he could not forget us, and would be sure to be ready with welcome when we escape in our turn.

Pardon me, dear friend, if I weary you with this talk, but my heart is so full of it, death seems such a different thing from what it used, such joy, such comfort, it is so sweet to look forward to; and for those who have gone on I have only rejoicing, and the consciousness of their well-being makes it easier for me to bear the loneliness without them. I know 't is so brief a time before my turn comes, and I shall have all I love. I am sure you feel it, too, do you not? Send me a word and tell me how you are. I have been so sorry to think how lonely you must be; the separation, even though we know how brief it is to be, is so hard while it lasts. But it is only to have patience a little longer, and the dear hand of your child clasps yours, and draws you away from weariness, pain, and perplexity into light and warmth and joy, and the beginning of a new and beautiful existence where all your powers are renewed and you begin afresh to live with those you love. Ah, how divine it is to think of! It is no dream, no fancy. I do not *think* it, I KNOW it is true.

God bless you, my dear friend. I wish I could comfort you, could give you the strength of my delight in all this, of my content and assurance that all is well. I wish I could make your brief loss less hard to bear. I think of you much and often.

I[1] crept out to the talk about the "Song of Songs" yesterday and saw Mohini, like a keen ray from the central sun, and heard his words of fire that burns not but saves, — fire that heats not, but lights the mind. Do you remember what Schiller said to the unknown author of the "Bhagavat Gîtâ" on first reading the poem? —

"Thee first, most holy prophet, interpreter of the Deity, by whatever name thou wast called among mortals, the author of this poem, by whose oracles the mind is rapt with ineffable delight to doctrines lofty, eternal, and divine, — thee first, I say, I hail, and shall always worship at thy feet."

I cannot express to you[2] my distress at the destruction of the birds. You know how I love them; every other poem I have written

[1] To Annie Fields. Boston.

[2] To Feroline W. Fox. Hotel Clifford, Cortes Street, Boston, April 1, 1886

has some bird for its subject, and I look at the ghastly horror of women's headgear with absolute suffering. I remonstrate with every wearer of birds. I never lose an opportunity of doing this whenever and wherever it occurs. People don't think what they are doing; they do not know what it involves. If they only can be made to see it we shall gain our point. No woman worthy of the name would wish to be instrumental in destroying the dear, beautiful creatures; and for such idle folly! To deck their heads like squaws, who are supposed to know no better, when a ribbon or a flower would serve their purpose just as well, and not involve this fearful sacrifice! Believe me, I, too, am engaged heart and soul in trying to save our dear birds. I don't care to head a league, because I think I can do just as much good in other ways, and I hate to drag myself into public vices any more than I can possibly help. Have you not noticed how carefully I keep out of publicity? But be sure I shall do everything in my power in other ways, quite as much as I could in the way you suggest. I will join this society whose circular you send me, and continue to work strongly, if quietly, in the cause. No one can have it more at heart than I.

My dear little Margaret:[1] — The story of Rupert is quite true, I am sorry to say. It all happened in our house when we lived in Newton. We felt so sorry to have the poor, pretty little canary killed by that wild butcher-bird! I have heard of a good many such cases; the butcher-birds come into the houses wherever they can find a canary, if they can get a chance.

Almost all the stories in the book are true, my dear little Margaret.

I[2] hear the rote of the sea distinctly as I sit here in the quiet room among the flowers, with only Charlotte Dana, and outside the doctor and the younger Charlotte quietly conversing. All the world is looking at the surf in "the great moonlight, light as any day." Evidently there has been a storm at sea, for the breakers are immense.

News comes to-night from John, my John; — a sad accident in Braveboat Harbor this morning. Three boys were drowned, but two managed to get ashore. There were five in the boat, which capsized in the inlet. I long to

[1] To Margaret I. Bowditch. Hotel Clifford, March 31, 1887.

[2] To Rose Lamb. September 1, 1887.

hear from John and Gertrude about it. It must have been a fearful shock to them.

The Turners are to go to-morrow, but Arthur Whiting stays till Saturday. His gift is *wonderful.* Dear Rose, I miss you so! The day seems strangely empty without you.

It[1] is so sweet and sunny and serene and profoundly silent this beautiful day! There is *absolute* silence; not a human sound, nor whisper of wave or wind, nor twitter of bird, nor chirp of insect; and the sea is a vast, blue, quiet floor under the floods of sunlight, not a cloud in all the sky. I wish you were here.

I was so pleased to get your[2] nice long letter and hear the flowers arrived safely, and Anne and all were pleased with them! There is plenty of time for writing now, and this only the seventh letter I have written here since supper, sitting by the fire all alone in the Bowditch parlor, Karl out at his photography, and not a mouse in the house; only myself! And the fire is made of bits of the west end of my room, the floor of which has walked off over the grass towards the water in the most amazing

[1] To Rose Lamb. September 11, 1887.
[2] To Ellen Robbins. Shoals, September 23, 1887.

fashion! Ruth and I promenaded there this afternoon with great delight and satisfaction, it brought us so near the sea. And the piazza will go still further, and Cedric is going to make another garden in the green hollow before *his* house, and my piazza will look right down into it and get its whiffs of fragrance. Such a big room, Ellen! you 'll have a place to paint in with some comfort.

I never do allow myself to plan, but when it 's a plan that 's got to be built one has to plan or it won't get done; but I must n't think too much about it. I have n't been so interested in any mundane affairs for many a long year! The wind makes such a noise in the empty, open, little, or rather big, new, old parlor, that you 'd think all the ghosts of all the summer visitors were dancing out there, and never a soul in the house is there but poor me!

We[1] only arrived here yesterday, being weather-bound in Portsmouth from Monday till Saturday. Sunday morning was still and gray and silvery calm. We had a lovely voyage across, and the island looked like a little city as we approached. I 'm *so* happy to be here! To-day

[1] To Rose Lamb. Shoals, March 12, 1888.

it is storming fiercely, snowing and raging, and the sea piling mountains high.

13th, Wednesday. I wish you could have seen the ocean to-day! Never in your wildest dreams could you imagine it. The sea came in at Broad Cove, east, and washed everything before it, and went through under the piazza between the music and main houses and out to the other cove, Babb's Cove, west, on the other side. The waves rose in great, toppling, green walls of water. I never saw them more tremendous. It has snowed for twenty-four hours; the island is white. Yet I saw a robin to-day, and we fed a flock of song sparrows at the door. I am so delighted to be here! We keep perfectly comfortable and so busy every moment. There is *so* much to be done. I have put more than a dozen boxes of seeds to start in my big window, pansies and cobæa and asters and lots of things. It is such delight to water and watch and hope for them. Karl and I are sitting before a big open coal fire in my mother's chamber. Now I am going to read aloud (from a new book Mr. Garrison sent us, on "Reincarnation"). . . . You *must* get this book on "Reincarnation," published by Houghton & Mifflin, written by E. D. Walker. *Do* send for it at once, any bookstore.

Friday. It cleared yesterday for the first time since we came, and the sun shone so beautifully on the snow-covered island, and the sea the divinest blue. This morning they are working hard to get the storm-toppled rocks out from the Pinafore's path, so she can go to Portsmouth this afternoon.

Such[1] a splendid lecture as Mr. Fiske gave us! I have never heard anything so fine and noble and dignified and interesting. It was the Benedict Arnold. And ever since he came we have had such good times, music morning, noon, and night. And he has told fascinating stories. Yesterday morning Mr. Mason played, like one inspired, for two hours. I declare I never imagined he could play so, and every minute I wished for you. Then all the evening was full of music, sonata after sonata. Paine played grandly, and then we sat up till twelve, Mr. Fiske telling stories. He sang, too, finely, "The Two Grenadiers" and other things.

Monday noon. Mr. Mason is playing ballades and nocturnes of Chopin. The day is divine; the sea light blue and sparkling, beautiful surf breaking in the sunshine, the white sails flitting and the flowers blowing for dear

[1] To Rose Lamb. July 29, 1888.

life, — such glories of gold and scarlet, pink, white, purple flame! How we miss you every hour! Mason is playing the funeral march of Chopin; it sounds strange in all this wealth of life and color.

I have come over from the big house (where I live now), this sweet morning, to sit on my piazza in the sun and talk to you.[1] For now I have plenty of time for everything. There is not a soul on the island except ourselves and the workmen, who are busy on the cottages, happily out of sight from here, whose saws and hammers sound afar off. I am sitting in the corner of the piazza facing the west, and the pale-blue sea is like a level floor before me, calm as the loveliest turquoise color. There are sails here and there, white in the sunshine, for the mackerel-fishing is going on, as it always does in the early autumn. There is the softest, faintest lilac-gray haze over the line of coast; the thin white clouds are in long level lines, so peaceful, so motionless! Every now and then a sleepy breaker rolls and whispers in foam on the rocks just before me, with a sound like a shell when you put it to your ear. Many, many little birds chirp and twitter about and

[1] To Rose Lamb. Shoals, September 25, 1888.

rustle in and out among the vines, song sparrows, nuthatches, finches. Some devour the insects, the pretty nuthatch, for instance, and others eat the seeds of the Japanese hop vine. They are all so busy, so pretty, so tame and dear! Yesterday, as I was going down the long piazza, Cedric called out in surprise as he came toward me; a nuthatch was sitting on my shoulder as I walked, quite at his ease, and I knew nothing about it!

Just now a big hawk swept down and past the railing, so near I could hear the whir of his wings. I do love to have the birds so tame, and I am really grateful to Heaven there is no one here to shoot hawk or curlew, wild pigeon or plover, or lovely long-legged heron, for they all come here in the autumn, and many another delightful feathered creature beside. Cedric is drawing his nets out in front, mackerel nets and lobster traps. I see him taking out lots of fish. High up above him in the blue a little thin white moon is softly outlined, a three-quarters moon; and though I know she is sinking towards the horizon, she does not seem to have moved since I began to watch her, all is so still, no air to stir a waft of vapor anywhere.

The crickets make such a warm, reposeful

simmering in the thick grass! Over Julia's garden fence the big white and golden single dahlias shine like stars, and masses of scarlet ones are glowing like the robes of kings.

The artist you left behind you was so homesick! I was thankful to have her get away last Thursday; the idea that she *could* not go nearly drove her wild, poor thing. Oh, the hawk has come back, and has perched on the corner of Julia's fence; he holds up his head like a falcon, his back shimmers with metallic lustre, and there are bars of black across his long tail. This is most exciting! Instantly every little bird is mute; they have all hidden, and are quite dumb with fear. Now, is n't it strange that among their own kind they should have an enemy so fearful and so fell? Worse than the guns of human folk, more accurate, more deadly in aim, more cruel. No; on the whole I 'm afraid my hospitality does not extend to the hawk, after all. I wish he would take wing for the continent and leave us alone, the birds and me.

I[1] write this little word just to say I am "a truly" grandmother at last, and Roland sent me a tiny satin lock of little Charles Eliot

[1] To Annie Fields. Shoals, November 10, 1888.

Thaxter's hair in his last letter, for he has named his boy after his best friend. I trust all is going well, as it was a week ago, with mother and child, but these long waits of a week between mails are *most* trying at this anxious time

Dear, did you think I was extravagant in saying I liked your poem better than anything you ever did? Because it just fitted my particular idiosyncrasies, you know!

I only wish you[1] could see this quaintest, coziest, sunniest little nook that ever was! This long room where I sit, the parlor, has four sunny windows all bowery with palms and ferns and blossoming things, the deep window-seats full, and hanging pots in clouds of blue and white and pink and yellow bloom, and hyacinths all ready to flower, and crocuses in boxes pushing up their gold and purple bubbles, and flower-stands beside with pinks and wall-flowers and all sorts of dear things, all flourishing, growing, and blooming.

The window in the corner looks down the street to the water of the river; the corner is round and picturesque. I found a Lowell car-

[1] To Adaline Hepworth. 47 State Street, Portsmouth, December 7, 1888.

pet just the color of the moss in the woods (a little greener than the piano cloth), and everything blends and is harmonious.

We[1] have been settled here in this sunny corner, Karl and I, since the middle of November, and I find it charming. I have nine rooms, and the sun does pour in delightfully. . . . I have on this floor this lovely parlor and my bedroom next it, a little dining-room, and the coziest kitchen, and bathroom, and a nice big hall, which is furnished and hung with pictures and pleasant as any room, all on one floor. Then upstairs there 's a big place for drying clothes, a carpenter's "shop" for Karl, nice room for the girl, a large room for Oscar, the dearest, prettiest little spare chamber, a chamber for Karl, and a good room for his photography. The house is so old and built so thoroughly that it is very warm and comfortable. No one has occupied it before to live in; the lower part was a shop, and the upper a great hall, the armory of the Rockingham Guards; and all the place has been made just to suit me, and it is so pretty and comfortable I am perfectly thankful to have it. I am a

[1] To M. L. Padelford. 47 State St., Portsmouth, December 12, 1888.

great deal better, and getting well fast under a treatment I discovered and apply myself. No doctors, thank you.

I must tell you[1] something. Just now I was lying in my comfortable sofa corner after dinner, having a small nap. Suddenly I felt and heard a queer fluttering at my ear which waked me so that I sprang up, putting my hand to my head, wide awake, and, lo! away fluttered a lovely pale-gold-colored butterfly with dark spots on his wings, and alighted on a basket of envelopes on my writing desk. I told Karl to slip out the envelope on which he stood, a large one, and hold him near a spike of pale-blue hyacinth flowers which have just blossomed for me in a glass. The pretty creature left the paper for the flowers and there he stands, opening and shutting his beautiful yellow fans, as if it were August and he in the middle of my garden. Where did he come from? I call it a marvel.

We[2] came here day before yesterday; the little Pinafore looked dressed for a festival, with all the plants and flowers on the hurricane deck. We came safely and pleasantly, and everything

[1] To Annie Fields. February 5, 1889.
[2] To Annie Fields. Shoals, April 8, 1889.

looked so pleasant and delightful when we got here. The good Theodine had everything bright and shining with a real Norwegian shine, and the plants in the ten sunny windows made a perfect bower of greenery and bloom. I have not seen them so beautiful since my dear mother left them. Ah, it is so pleasant to creep into that dear mother's comfortable bed, and it is so charming to be here! I love it so! The song sparrows sing and sing so sweetly, and the great lulling sound of the ocean is delicious to my ears.

I am pretty well, but a little uncertain feeling stays by me. I am not sure of myself from hour to hour, but I shall hope for the best.

You[1] cannot know what a joy your dear letter is to me. I have read it again and again. Ah, my dear friend, you speak so kindly! But who in our time has given so much strength and refreshment as you have done, not only to your friends and your country, but to all the world, which has been bettered by your living in it?

Yes, I had a quiet, lovely winter in Portsmouth. I did more writing than for years, and was well and content until about three weeks

[1] To John G. Whittier. Shoals, April 11, 1889.

ago, when I was suddenly very ill, as I have been twice before, for no reason that anybody appears able to find out, except "overwork" the doctors say, in years past. I say as little about it as possible.

I do not mind the thought of death, it means only fuller life, but there is a pang in the thought of leaving Karl. But I know the heavenly Father provides for all. It may be I shall get quite well and strong again in this beautiful air. I hope so, but whatever befalls, I am ready and know that all is for best.

Never did the island look so lovely in the early spring since I was a little child playing on the rocks at White Island. Oh the delicious dawns and crimson sunsets, the calm blue sea, the tender sky, the chorus of the birds! It all makes me so happy! Sometimes I wonder if it is wise or well to love any spot on this old earth as intensely as I do this! I am wrapped up in measureless content as I sit on the steps in the sun in my little garden, where the freshly turned earth is odorous of the spring. How I hope you can come to us this summer! Every year I plant the garden, for your dear eyes, with yellow flowers. I never forget those lovely summers long ago when you came and loved my flowers.

I am going to send you with this a little copy of an old picture of Karl and myself when we were babes together, he one year old, I eighteen.

Thank you for the beautiful poem you enclosed. It is most lovely. You ask what I have been writing? A great deal, for me. I wish I had sent you the April "St. Nicholas," for in it is a version I made of Tolstoï's "Where love is there is God also." I had such reverence for the great author's work I hardly dared touch it, but I did it with the greatest love. I called it "The Heavenly Guest." Dear Sarah Jewett has a sweet story begun in the April number, and my poem follows.

Ever with deep, gentle, grateful love,

Your C. T.

It[1] is between four and five in the morning, and so still I can hear the fog-horn at Whale's-back Lighthouse, for a light mist lies over the sea; and the birds! oh the birds, how they sing, the song sparrows! Such a sound of pure happiness is hardly found in all nature. There is a girl here who begged to be taken in for a week or two, having overworked herself into great exhaustion; she takes care of

[1] To Annie Fields. April 20, 1889.

herself pretty much, and stays on the rocks all day, as near as she can get to the sea, in a blissful state of mind. She calls the sparrows "island bobolinks," for never anywhere has she heard them so sing before. That is what I always say; nowhere else do you hear them so rapturously warble.

I[1] did not forget that I promised to write about the birds when I reached this place, but I have been so confounded at my own ignorance that I really have n't had a word to say! The killdeer stayed till about March 1st; but we did not get here till April, so I missed seeing them. There are so many birds that visit us, not to stay, for there are no trees in which to build, and I know so few by name!

The commonest birds, — song sparrows, blackbirds, robins, sandpipers, loons, gulls, etc., all the swallows, barn, chimney, and the sapphire blue and white breasted martins, the nuthatch, kingfisher, kingbird, etc., — all these I know, but there are so many more! I wish you were here to tell me of them. My brother Cedric told me he saw a red and black "flycatcher" yesterday; now I wonder just what that was!

[1] To Bradford Torrey. Appledore, Isles of Shoals, off Portsmouth, May 21, 1889.

Mr. Brewster was here in the middle of July one year when a pair of vireos came and spent the day in the vine over my piazza; it was so pleasant to have them recognized, for I, alas! knew them not, welcome though they were.

I do hope you 'll find your way here this summer, if only to take a peep at our wild rock. I should be delighted to welcome you, I assure you, more than the vireos, and that 's saying a great deal; for I have a passion for birds and adore them, though I am so ignorant of them. But the sweet housekeeping of the martins in the little boxes on my piazza roof is more enchanting to me than the most fascinating opera, and I worship music! I think I must have begun a conscious existence as some kind of a bird in æons past, I love them so! Do come and let us have a talk about them by and by.

There 's[1] a deep green place where a little white-blooming medlar tree grows, and a balm of Gilead, and tall wild roses, and ferns and alders, etc., — there the land birds will linger for a few days. It is very pleasant, the way they have of visiting us for a few days, only we miss them so when they go! A bobolink spent all

[1] To Bradford Torrey. Shoals, May 27, 1889.

last week with us, and we really were reluctant to come in to our meals and leave him singing! And when a ferruginous thrush came to see us last year, all the inhabitants of the island used to go out and turn their faces to the sky and listen when he began his heavenly pipe! I am writing this at five in the morning, and the white-throated sparrow is whistling! I really think they must build here; they are always heard; "whistlers" every one calls them here. I am always up at four, and I hear everything every bird has to say on any subject whatever.

To-night[1] there is the most delicious slender red crescent sinking slowly in the west, throwing a mysterious glimmer on the calm sea; there isn't a whisper of wind, and it is balmy and beautiful; windows and doors all open; a most heavenly night. Now people begin to come and I must stop.

It[2] is just before tea, and I have watered my ferns and little winter rose garden, and the sun is dropping, large and red, toward the sea; and the water is glassy calm, so that a whaleboat, which has just put off with a troop of young

[1] To Rose Lamb. August 29, 1889.
[2] To Rose Lamb. Shoals, August 31, 1889.

people for a sail, is being rowed heavily toward the track of crimson light, not wind enough stirring to fill her lazy sails. It is so dark in this corner where my desk is that I can scarcely see.

Last night[1] was like a dream. All the days now are exquisite; the sun rises and sets like a crimson cannon-ball, and the colors of things are indescribably beautiful. And the moon at night, and the soft airs and hazy stars, all things make me wish for you more and more. Paine and Mason played together Beethoven duets last evening; it was fine. Then Mason played alone, and then Paine. There is an Alma Tadema, as I call her, here. She looks so like his pictures, — crisp, coal-black hair that will turn in little rings all over her head in spite of combs and braids. She came in with a wind-harp in her hand. She put it in the window, and it mourned and wailed. Later. I have just come over from tea. There is no one here. The lamps are lighted, the flowers glow in their old splendor. Everything is full of the thought of you, dear Rose!

As I came over, the light was exquisite, the half moon red and warm in mid-heaven, and

[1] To Rose Lamb. Shoals, September 4, 1889.

the west faintly luminous; the tide very high and full, the waves whispering, the south wind blowing softly; the tall hollyhocks stirring gently against sea and sky, the masses of leaves and flowers in the garden dusky and dim, — all so quiet.

How curious the thought of the past is! Nearly forty years ago this month I was married. The moonlight on the water looked exactly the same that evening as it does now. How many lives we seem to live in one! I heard the cricket in the grass, the same sound I heard to-night.

The boat is just in, dear Rose.[1] Mr. Paine has gone over for the letters. He has been playing sonatas for me this morning, ending with the great Appassionata. I say "me," for there is no one else to listen. . . . Sat on the yellow sofa, I in my corner here, whence I can look out into the sunlit, glowing garden through the openings in the vines, on the breezy, sparkling sea, whereon the haze lies like the soft bloom on grapes, and it makes everything dreamy and beautiful, all the sails and everything. Such a mellow, golden day. We have had no such days all summer; utterly perfect.

[1] To Rose Lamb. September 5, 1889.

And the gardens are all blooming afresh, full of sweet-peas and everything.

My[1] brother has shot three white owls within the last few days, much to my distress. Perfectly beautiful they were, their plumage so exquisitely white and soft and clean. My brother (Cedric) told me that years ago he counted twenty-five within sight at once here, one autumn, and shot seven of them. I think it means an early winter and cold when they appear so early. They are better than many cats for destroying the rats that do congregate in the most surprising way on these rocks. Even the loneliest outlying rocks are infested with rats that live on shellfish, etc. And as for this big, rambling house, we have one continual war, with cats and poison and traps and every weapon and device, to keep them down about it; it really comes to be a question which shall survive, rats or human beings! In the autumn, when the birds should be away, we import an army of cats; but I dread them, for the birds stay till the winter is fairly here, scattering flocks and companies, and there is continual massacre and flying of feathers. A bluebird came and stayed here all alone for

[1] To Bradford Torrey. Shoals, November 10, 1889.

more than a week in the last of October, and we watched him day after day, and wondered what he could be thinking of, to stay here all alone. His sweet cry attracted us first, and then we saw him actually alighting on the tennis wires and all about the gardens; perfectly tame he seemed to be. A crow blackbird, all alone, too, came and stayed a fortnight and over, into November, scratching like a hen about the manure-heaps on the tennis ground, — grakle do you call him? His neck was green and purple in the sunshine, and he looked like a little crow. He was so tame you could hardly scare him up. The song sparrows are like little dogs and cats, so tame; one hopped beside me on the path a long way as I was walking the other day, and finally crossed the road just before my feet quite at his leisure, as if he knew I would n't hurry him. Did I tell you the pair of cuckoos stayed here all summer long, till late in the season, into September? Yesterday we found a cat had devoured a large bird, — large as a thrush. I did n't see him, but they told me about it, and I found the feathers, dark blue-gray, and olive at the tips. I startled a big brown owl out from under the eaves of the piazza last week: he flew away and I did not see him again.

Nuthatches creep up and down the roofs and peer at the edges of the shingles. The most enchanting little wrens have haunted the gardens this fall. A pleasant day comes and the island is alive with wings, and when it is cold they are gone. We have had many more crows than usual this autumn. Coots and loons and ducks, etc., my brother shoots whenever he can, of course. All summer we hardly see a gull; now the water is white with them.

I have read your[1] beautiful book, every single word of it, with the greatest possible pleasure, and I feel like shaking hands with you with both hands. Not only have I read it once, but I take it up again and again for pure pleasure. I can't begin to tell you how I sympathize with your moods, with your philosophy, with all you say. "Esoteric Peripateticism" is the most delightful of all, I think. I do so heartily agree with you! "Some of the best things of this life, things unseen and therefore eternal, are never to be come at industriously." "Behind the Eye" is another favorite of mine. Did you ever watch the fading out of a life? Have you noticed, when people go out of this

[1] To Bradford Torrey. 47 State St., Portsmouth, December 13, 1889.

world, they pass from behind their eyes, precisely as when a face looks from a window and then leaves it? — there is the window, but the person is gone. Not extinguished, never! but simply passed away from behind the windows from which all their lives they have looked.

I think we all owe you a debt of gratitude for letting us see with your eyes and hear with your ears as you take us straying through the country. An old woman said to me once, "I have just been reading your book. How you must enjoy your mind!" I am sure I enjoy yours, and love to read all you have to say. Have n't you a spare photograph of yourself? It is a curious feeling to write to "a mind" entirely, in this impersonal way. Please send your shadow to me, and I will send you my flower-bank and myself, a grandmother of fifty-four.

Don't think it arrogance when I say I think I have a deeper enjoyment and understanding of your[1] book than most people; it is only because I have lived so much of my life quite alone with nature. It seems as if a spring of joyful recognition leapt within me, as you were of my kin. People do go through life so blindly, so

[1] To Bradford Torrey. 47 State St., Portsmouth, December 20, 1889.

dark and deaf to this beautiful world you know so well, so dead to the keen and exquisite enjoyment Nature offers to all who will take it.

I was pleased to come across one of your quotations about "blunting the fine point of seldom pleasure" from the Shakespeare sonnet. I know and love well those matchless sonnets! I think, if all the books in the world had to go, I should snatch this little volume in preference to anything else, to live with gratefully the rest of my life. How few people know or care about them! But what exhaustless wealth, what wisdom, what splendor, what utter perfection of expression! The force of language can no further go.

Your note with the knawel just comes. Thank you much. Now I don't know it. It is very like a little rose-purple, star-shaped flower which carpets the ground in places at the Shoals; I mean the leaves are like. I wonder if you know what I mean? Color and shape are exquisite, but the blossom very tiny.

Thank you[1] for the second beautiful book which came on Christmas Day. I am reading it very slowly, because I enjoy it so much, and

[1] To Bradford Torrey. 47 State St., Portsmouth, December 27, 1889.

go back and read over again, and am miserly about the pleasure of it, and make it last as long as I can, and after it is all done what a lovely mood it leaves one in! There are few books, in these latter days at least, that I wish to take up again and again for the refreshment they bring; and it is the finest kind of a compliment that can be paid to a writer, this of real love for his work, — a wish to make a companion of it, and to keep it always at hand for the pure enjoyment of it. I heard the hermit thrushes in South Berwick woods. Sarah Jewett drove me down into the woods just after sunset, and we sat in the carriage and listened. I had never heard them before. What an experience it was I leave you to guess. What you say about them is most interesting, and how true it is that a single movement of Beethoven's is better than a whole world of Liszt's transcriptions! I don't know the brown thrush's song, at least as such. Does n't Burroughs say somewhere that the jay has a delicious love song? Do you know it? I have not yet come to it, perhaps.

I was delighted when you[1] classed the song

[1] To Bradford Torrey. 47 State St., Portsmouth, January 5, 1890.

sparrow among the immortals! Do you know, I have noticed them, too, crouching to protect their legs from the biting wind while they fed. Tell me, have you ever tied mutton and beef bones to the trees immediately around the house where you live, for the birds? In the yard of the house at Newton, where we used to live, I was in the habit of fastening these bones (from cooked meat) to a cherry-tree which grew close to my sitting-room window; and when the snow lay thick upon the ground, that tree would be alive with bluejays and chickadees and woodpeckers, red-headed and others, and sparrows (not English), and various other delightful creatures. I was never tired watching them and listening to them. Has not your heart been torn with the horrors of women's headgear this winter? I never have seen the like. It is something monstrous; every feminine biped goes feathered through the streets. I notice Browning has a shot at these senseless women in "Asolando," his last book: —

> "What clings
> Half savage like around your hat?
> . . . Wild-bird wings!
> Next season, Paris prints assert,
> We must go feathered to the skirt."

Then the man speaks: —

> "You, clothed with murder of His best
> And harmless beings!"

"Clothed with murder," that expresses it. Poor birds! Did you notice that six per cent of the myriads of birds killed by the Statue of Liberty lighthouse were Maryland yellow-throats? By and by there will be no more birds at all. But I hope I shall be dead before that happens.

How pleasant it is to hear of your[1] lovely life! It is all as it should be. . . . To have each other, and a home so sweet, is the best earth has to give to her children. Truly I am sorry I have to be away just when you are settled in town. How I should love to see your charming nest! But it is long since I have been in Boston, even for an hour, and I have almost forgotten how the city looks. I am disappointed not to be able yet to paint the olive-jar I planned for you. . . . Yet I will not fret, but take it patiently; it might be much worse. When one gets to my age, the one word of which we must learn the meaning is renunciation. Things that seemed so important, so indispensable, — we learn to let them go, and patiently see friends and faces vanish and all things depart, till we follow, too, and "lose our lives to find them." But you two joyful-

[1] To Mrs. Arthur Whiting. January 9, 1890.

hearted are a long, long way from this milestone in the road of earthly existence.

I am glad you[1] liked the verses, and glad to have your letter this morning, as we are all sitting on our trunks, so to speak, weather-bound, packed for the Shoals, and kept by rains and gales for days.

I should have written before, dear Ada, for I have thought of you much and often, but I have been fighting with nervous prostration all winter, with the waves going over me until I was wellnigh drowned. I have given my strength all away all my life, and now I am bankrupt. But I am fighting my way up out of the N. P. with the help of a wise old doctor who lives not far from here, who feeds me on champagne, which makes of me a new creature quite. But I 've not much strength to write, though I have *so much* to talk about. . . . Do come to the Shoals for as long as you can. This spinning footstool is such a slight hold for our feet, we shall all disperse so soon our flitting shades! And where then, who then, of those we love?

[1] To Adaline Hepworth. 47 State St., Portsmouth, April 8, 1890.

I[1] am all the time vexed at my ignorance, and wish somebody were here to tell me the different birds and recognize these delicious voices. There are more birds than usual this year, I am happy to say. The women haven't assassinated them all for the funeral pyres they carry on their heads. The martins, white-breasted swallows, came promptly the first day of April and took up their quarters in the boxes we prepared for them, and very soon all sorts of birds arrived by the thousands and made the island alive with sound and motion, — legions of yellow hammers, red-headed woodpeckers, song sparrows, and many other kinds; blackbirds, creepers, wrens, robins, bluebirds; any quantity of a greenish-yellow bird, small; and slate-colored birds with white feathers in tail, a black cap, and grayish-white whiskers (the feathers at sides of the head had that effect). A flock of nearly a hundred blue herons alighted on a little island near us, Londoners', and made the air ring with their noise. What is the bird that comes in such numbers, — greenish olive with grayish-brown breast covered with perfectly circular brown spots, a bird not quite so large as a robin? Some sort of thrush?

[1] To Bradford Torrey. Appledore, Isles of Shoals, off Portsmouth, May 1, 1890.

May 2d. Yesterday appeared the barn swallows. In the hollow where the houses stand the white-throated sparrows whistle sweet! And I hear the phœbes, and many, many others whose voices I know, but whose names I don't know. Anything like the joy in the voices of the martins and swallows I don't believe can be found in nature. Pure gladness without alloy. Though the song sparrow is sweet and friendly in his tones, he does not begin to be so thoughtlessly gay. I heard the first sandpiper yesterday. What a heavenly, mellow, tender call! The stillness is so profound here (no human sounds; only when winds and waters are stirring is the silence broken), that every call of any bird seems to have twice the significance that it has elsewhere; you get the whole value of it. Until the middle of June the quiet is undisturbed; then comes an eddy of humanity from the great world, — chatter of voices, patter of feet, much empty sound up and down the long piazzas, women with carcasses of the birds I love borne in simple vanity above their faces; much that is pleasant, too, for I have my own corner, my little garden and my friends, and the piazza is no more to me than Washington Street. In September away the crowd blows,

like leaves in wind, and down comes the healing balm of quiet again upon the place. I do hope you can run down and take a look at it some time during the summer.

I had a dispute — no, I never dispute! I despise it, but a difference of opinion — with a friend about what you say on page sixty-nine of the "Rambler," in that most charming chapter. Of course the boy of ten years is yourself, — your memory of yourself at that age, which walks with you in your rambles to-day, for you say it, "I know that those who meet and pass me see only one." I do not even ask if it is so; I know it. Yet my friend insisted it must be some child who walked with you!

The flowers are earlier here this year, eyebright, anemone, erythronium, etc.

How come on your essays? And have you not any more of the collection of bird poems? I have thought of several which would occur to you, — Dana's lovely "Beach" and Bryant's "Waterfowl," "The Birds of Killingworth," of course, etc. Must they be Americans only? There are such beautiful English verses!

Yes,[1] indeed, I have been terribly ill, — at death's door; neuralgia of the stomach, the

[1] To Adaline Hepworth. Shoals, June 8, 1890.

doctor says; too near the heart, you know. It would not yield to morphine or anything, this last attack, and I should have been glad to die, except for the thought of Karl. I don't mind the change of state any more than changing the town I live in here, though I don't think any one gets more enjoyment out of life than I do, or loves more God's expression of himself in this world. But I don't shrink in the least at the thought of the change. If Karl could only go with me! He will be so desolate! These attacks are always hanging over me, like a sword by a hair, to slash my chrysalis and set me free. Oh, my dear, they won't let me *do* a thing, and I must n't write. I shall only say it gives me the deepest joy to think of you and dear old George coming so early, and I will have that room behind the parlor held fast for you, if it is a *possible thing*, for my own delight and satisfaction in having you near. I long to see you.

I[1] have moved down to my mother's room from the lonesome cottage. The little garden is splendid with flowers now, and draped to the eaves with thick vines. To-day the rain falls steadily, the slow, autumn rain. There is no

[1] To Adaline Hepworth. September 15, 1890.

sound, except the falling drops, — of wind, or sea, or bird, or human creature; it seems like the end of life, so still and so motionless. I think I must go over to Portsmouth early this year. The silence weighs on me. I am tired after all the long summer.

The griefs God sends, if one only stops to think, after all are easy to bear, *because* God sends them. It is only the pain one brings on one's self that cannot so patiently be borne.

You [1] would have laughed to see the box of toads which came for me night before last! Ninety toads, all wired over in a box, and wondering what fate was in store for them, no doubt. Soon as the mowing was done, all the million slugs in the grass charged into my poor garden, and post haste I sent for more of my little dusky pets, my friends, my saviors! And I turned the ninety loose in the fat slugging grounds, and such a breakfast as they must have had! If there 's one thing I adore more than another, it 's a toad! They eat every bug in the garden! In France it is quite an industry, catching toads and selling them to gardeners; did you know it? I have only just found it out.

[1] To Annie Fields.

I don't know what you[1] will think of my delay in acknowledging your kindness, but I have been under the weather for the last week or two, and I would not write you till I had read every word of this most beautiful book you sent me.[2] Believe me, there is not one line, one word of it all, that I do not fully recognize and thoroughly appreciate. Alas, I have been all through this sorrow! step by step I could go with her on the way. In the little parchment-covered volume I sent you, the verses "Impatience," "Her Mirror," "Compensation," all grew out of my sorrow for the loss of my dear mother, a loss to which I never can become accustomed. I don't mean to say for a moment that my verses come near Edith Thomas's, but there is the same intense feeling in both. I think this book of hers felicitous, title and all, most beautiful, as I said before, and I read and reread it with a pleasure that never ceases. I thank you so much for it! What an exquisite and elegant little book it is outside, too! and so pleasant to the touch! It is a treasure.

Tell me, are you gathering pussy-willows

[1] To Bradford Torrey. 47 State St., Portsmouth, February 8, 1891.

[2] *The Inverted Torch*, by Edith M. Thomas.

and alder catkins by the armfuls as I am here? For Goths and Vandals are hacking and hewing at everything in the lovely wild roadsides, and I bring these darlings home and give them away right and left, such delicious tokens of spring at hand! They are so beautiful this year, all rose and silver. There 's an old road, called the Gosling Road, — delightful name! — in Newington, close by, where I go for them. Such troops of chickadees I find! and prowling shrikes in all directions, ready to slay and spit them on thorns. Why must there be such deadly enemies constructed for anything that lives! What between the shrikes and owls, and cats and weasels, and women, — worst of all! — I wonder there 's a bird left on this planet! They sent up sixty-eight snowy owls from Cape Neddick, below this on the coast, in a batch last month! Such wholesale butchery is something terrible. "They," I said, not the women this time! but everything that wore trousers was shooting white owls the first of the winter. Robins are singing at the Shoals.

I[1] have been packing this afternoon and am tired. I have to be so careful of myself, and this mysterious thing which seizes me is *so*

[1] To Anna Eichberg King. Portsmouth, March 18, 1891.

mysterious, coming upon me with no reason and no warning, I never feel safe a moment, though I take every precaution in my power to circumvent the enemy. Oh, it is not death I fear and dread, but a long, suffering illness, dying a hundred deaths of pain before release, and making those who love me suffer involuntarily through my suffering. That is what I dread. I shall be so thankful if I may slip away in a flash; this is the boon for which I pray. Last spring I was near that crumbling verge, and oh, what fiery torment I went through! I don't like this feeling of uncertainty, and I am half afraid to go to the Shoals, much as I desire to do so, before boats run regularly.

It[1] is only three o'clock in the morning. Since my illness I can seldom sleep after two, and in the long, still hours a thought has come into my mind which I want to propose to you. Do you not think it would perhaps do you good if you came here early, if only for a few days or a week, while it is yet fresh and still and no humanity to speak of about? It is more than three years since I have seen you.

I am feeling the loss of Mr. Ware so much!

[1] To Anna Eichberg King. Shoals, April 21, 1891.

He was very near and dear to me, and I leaned on him; he was full of cheer and strength and comfort, and I loved him. If death were the exception and not the rule, and we were not so swiftly to follow, these separations would be intolerably sad. We know no more of our next change of life than we knew of this before we were born into it; but that what we call death is merely change, who can doubt? Surely you do not, do you, dear Annie? We shall follow and find them all, those who belong to us.

"For Life is ever Lord of Death,
And Love can never lose its own."

The[1] "bay birds," as people about here call the swimming sandpiper, are seen only in the spring, at least my brother has only seen them at this season, and he sees them almost every day as he crosses the nine miles of brine betwixt here and the port of Portsmouth. He says he sees them in very large flocks, yesterday saw a flock of about twenty-five, but sees them in very much larger flocks, and almost always accompanied by a small gull about as big as a tern, which is not a tern at all, but quite different. This gull flies with them, swims with them, seems always attendant upon them,

[1] To Bradford Torrey. Shoals, May 21, 1891.

and is not seen at any other time. He does not know it at all. There are all sorts of gulls about here, you know, but this is a rare creature. I have only seen the "bay bird" once, and that was a single specimen that I think must have been wounded or disabled in some way, yet I could see no trace of any injury about him. He was swimming about the wharf near the landing, a pretty, dainty creature, in soft shades of gray and white, with the "needle-like beak," and a rapidity of motion that I have never seen equaled in anything except a darting dragon-fly, or some restless insect. He was never for one instant still, darting after his food on the surface of the water. He seemed perfectly tame; was n't the least afraid of anything or anybody, merely moving aside to avoid an oar-blade, and swaying almost on to the rocks with the swirl of the water. I watched him till I was tired, and went away and left him still frisking. I am so glad to tell you of something you have n't seen! I wish you could tell me about the different sorts of sparrows that pester and delight us. They drag the sweet-peas out of the ground persistently, when they are ten inches long from root to top. There is one huge fellow, big as a robin, but "chunky," and dim in plu-

mage; he eats buds of trees, and has a sharp, single-cutting note, something like the English variety. Then there is one a whole size larger than the song sparrow, with a striped black and white head; he devours everything. Then there are myriad song-sparrows and "chippies" and vespers, and I am sure a pair of white-throats have a nest among some tall bushes; I hear their brimming note, thrice repeated, continually, beginning at three o'clock in the morning.

Oh dear, I shall not die happy till I have had a bird talk with you! I want to be posted on swallows. We call the white-breasted, square-tailed kind, with brilliant metallic-blue backs, martins; are we right? They build in little bird-houses all over the place. Then there are barn and chimney swallows. I have a perfect skeleton of a swallow found in a nest on my piazza, perfect. I wonder if you would like it?

It[1] is a difficult task to chose among Mr. Whittier's poems those which I like best, there are so many that have become a part of my life, so many that appeal with resistless force to every

[1] To C. E. L. Wingate. Portsmouth, N. H., November 22, 1891.

thoughtful soul. I have always regarded him as New England's greatest lyric poet, essentially an outgrowth of her soil and rich with all her native picturesqueness and peculiar charm, appealing to the hearts of her people with a directness which does not fail to reach the lowliest as well as the most cultured. Our other famous poets are stars of the same magnitude doubtless, but of a different color, and the high, pure light of Whittier's genius burns clear and stands alone with an immortal beauty of its own, belonging to the things which are eternal. He is a power for good in his own land and in the world, a landmark up to which all struggling souls may look and gather fresh courage to climb. How many instances I recall in which I have seen his beautiful words comforting the weariness of age and inspiring with noble impulses the fiery heart of youth! Truly I know of no one who has been more revered and beloved. His very name is a symbol of Truth and unflinching integrity, and the good he has done comes back to him now in the blessing his friends and his country bring to him with the homage of their admiration.

Nothing but sickness in the family would have prevented my replying to your[1] most dear and

[1] To Clara Kathleen Rogers. Portsmouth, January 2, 1892.

kind letter long before this, but that I valued it most deeply I am sure you know.

R——'s little family have been with me for two months, absorbing every instant of my time, with the two babes, and in the last month both were ailing more or less with colds, and the elder had a severe attack of grippe, for such a little fellow, and I have been so anxious, so anxious I cannot express it to you. For when he grew better his mother had to leave him with us (for he was n't fit to go) while she took possession, with the rest of the family, of their new little house in Cambridge; and there is much to be done getting settled in a new house, you know, and a little baby in arms with its nurse, and trying to find a cook, and everything at once. So the sweet little Eliot stayed with his "granna," who worships the ground he walks on, and counted every beat of his quick-fluttering little heart. Oh, I never meant in my old age to become subject to the thrall of a love like this! it is almost dreadful — so absorbing, so stirring, down to the deeps. For the tiny creature is so old and wise and sweet, and so fascinating in his sturdy common sense and clear intelligence, and his affection for me is a wonderful, exquisite thing, the sweetest flower that has bloomed for me in

all my life through. Now that we have carried him home to Cambridge, I miss him so that it takes all my philosophy to meet the emergency. His toys, his books, all the tokens of his enchanting presence, fairly wring my heart, for I want him every day and hour and minute. You will think me a demented old creature, I fear, but the whole thing is so new and strange and unexpected to myself that I can't get used to it. He is only three years old, this baby, but we converse as if he were quite as old as his granna! He is perfectly bewitching, tall as if he were five, in a suit of dark blue cloth, little breeches and blouse, and broad linen collar with a knotted necktie, soft and broad, under his chin; and his fair hair, like the yellow harvest moonlight, very fair and lustrous, cut close to his noble, compact head. How can his grandmother do anything but fall hopelessly in love with him! There's a little girl, too, like a wild rose, a year old, and she is charming, but Eliot has carried all my heart away.

I am sorry that your[1] faces are turned away from the sea, but I dare say it is best for you, and I am sure it must be beautiful in Cornish. I am always longing to have the people I love

[1] To Mrs. Arthur Whiting. Portsmouth, January 7, 1892

near me; that is my idea of heaven, just to have the souls that *belong* to me within reach, all the people with whom I am in sympathy, all, in a word, whom I love. But though I so seldom see you or hear of or from you, I never forget you and Arthur. I have the sincerest affection for you both, and it is always a joy to think of you together.

I am thankful you are both well. Illness is such a terrible thing; and to have our dearest suffering, what a tug it is on the heart and soul of us! I am well, but must walk just such a path and no other to keep so, spending one half of every day out of doors, no matter where below zero the thermometer has gone, or what is falling from the clouds.

Sometimes I find myself in Boston, on my way to my enchanting grandchildren, and if I ever can get a minute I will try to find you in your cozy nest. I know it must be charming where you and Arthur have made your home.

I[1] have been once more to Cambridge, flying back next day, to see my little boy, who is growing stronger, Heaven be praised, every day, though he looks still pretty white and thin, but I think he is on the road to health and feel

[1] To Annie Fields. Portsmouth, January 10, 1892.

better about him. He clung to my neck. "Only *one* granna," he said, "only one!" He frightens me; if he were fifty instead of three he could not say more thoughtful things.

I thought of you when I read that fine article of Emerson's in the Atlantic. There is no one like him. Do you remember this passage? —

"It is the property of the religious sentiment to be the most refining of all influences. No external advantages, no good birth or breeding, no culture of taste, no habit of command, no association with the elegant, even no depth of affection that does not rise to a religious sentiment, can bestow that delicacy and grandeur of bearing which belong to a mind accustomed to celestial conservations. All else is coarse and external, all else is tailoring and cosmetics, beside this, for thoughts are expressed in every look and gesture, and these thoughts are as if angels had talked with the child."

I did not know who wrote the article as I turned the pages of the magazine, looking at the opening lines of each; and the moment I read the first words of this, I found I could not stop, held by so fine a spell was I, and, turning to the cover to see who spoke with such a voice, lo! Emerson! No wonder I was held.

In little more than another week, perhaps a fortnight, I hope to go once more for a night to my children, and then see you with these loving eyes.

I enclose a grosbeak's foot, and must tell you[1] about it. Day before yesterday I was driving through deep sands, and right in the middle of the road lay a dead grosbeak, frozen stiff, on his back, and with this string fastened to his leg. Poor little thing! I picked him up, and have been wondering how under heaven that string ever got itself wound around his leg in such a way. It looks as if some one had tied it there, does n't it? I send it to you because it is so curious; don't send it back. The place was far from any houses. I am sure it caught and caused the bird's death. I have been driving this morning nearly to Mount Agamenticus, and we saw a large flock of grosbeaks alight in a tree; they seemed to fill it full; and a splendid male in crimson sat on the top twig. I have never seen them here before that I remember; is n't it remarkable that they stay all winter?

Thank you for directing me towards the Club

[1] To Bradford Torrey. 47 State St., Portsmouth, January 15, 1892.

in the Atlantic. I am always glad to find anything of yours anywhere. Do you know all about Richard Jefferies? I am just learning about him. His books are marvelous, and Walter Besant's "Life" of him, or rather "Eulogy," the most delightful thing I have seen for many a day. So close to nature he was, this poor Jefferies, and his life too short among those things he loved so deeply. His novels do not amount to much, I am told, but the others, that deal with out of doors, are simply wonderful and breathlessly interesting.

Do tell me what you think of this tragedy of a string.

I have done nothing but lament your[1] departure ever since you went. Never was there such an exquisite summer, never such good times of Shoals kinds and sorts. Mr. William Winch is here, and he sings and sings, oh, how he sings! and he says every now and then, "This is what Miss Benedict likes," before he begins some especially divine song, and then we all regret you are not here to listen.

Mr. Mason asks me to tell you that he has had some work for which he would have given much to have your assistance, so that he has

[1] To Evelyn Benedict. Shoals, August 28, 1892.

missed you not only for reasons sentimental, but for reasons practical. We have just got through with the most immense storm I ever saw in the summer, and the surf has been beyond all human description. People got up and came down in the middle of the night, thinking the island would be cast away! They are out in the wet all the time. Appleton Brown brings in a new picture every five minutes of the boiling breakers!! I am expecting Mr. Whittier presently, dear old man. He said, "I want to go once more to the Shoals." I think the very best thing that came to us this summer was the visit of Mr. Alden ("God in His World," you know). He read to us some chapters of his new book, "A Study of Death." Would you had been here to listen!

It was delightful to see your[1] handwriting and know you again at home. Dear Annie, has not Death been busy? Everybody gone. Bryant, Longfellow, Lowell, Whittier, Browning, Tennyson! Even dear Sam Longfellow has joined that mute procession, too. What an empty world it grows!

My brother is better, thank Heaven, — down

[1] To Annie Fields. 47 State St., Portsmouth, October 10, 1892.

stairs, and I hope out of danger. I am going to take him out of doors a little while to-day.

Yesterday,[1] when my brother and I were driving through the deep woods, following the track of the woodcutters who are making such carnage among the magnificent pines, we saw a bird, a wonderful bird. Near an open space where the lumber was piled (for there is a raving sawmill down there in the very heart of the woods), on the top rail of a fence, he alighted a moment close to us. He was larger than a robin, not so plump, but a good deal longer; his wings and tail were mottled black, white, and gray, but his whole body was the most delicious red color, all his feathers a kind of crimson and crushed-strawberry color, most vivid and delicate. We both thought his beak was roundish and blunt, something like a Java sparrow. We thought of crossbill and grosbeak, but it was n't a crossbill, and I never saw a grosbeak so long and slender, and he was all over crimson, except his wings and tail. Now what was he? Do tell us if you can.

I wanted to tell you at the time of a flight of blackbirds we saw on the 21st of October.

[1] To Bradford Torrey. Portsmouth, December 14, 1892.

There were thousands and thousands of them. We stopped our horse on the hilltop and watched them, darkening the sky above, beyond us, fully ten minutes before they had all flown over. I never imagined there could be so many blackbirds in the world. As near as we could judge, they were flying northwest, but I mean some time to take a little compass to that hilltop, to be sure. It was a very interesting sight. I shall look forward eagerly to your answer about our beautiful bird. He was simply perfect!

I was so glad to have your[1] letter. Doubtless the bird was a grosbeak, though that first one was the largest I have seen. We see them every day in flocks of from five and six to a dozen or more. Yesterday a small flock filled a little tree, and at the top was a crimson one; such a bit of color in the sun, against the winter sky! How charming they are! Yesterday we explored a cart path leading up to a crest from which we got such a magnificent view of Great Bay that we stopped the horse and stayed there half an hour, just to gaze at the loveliness spread before us, and it was all we could do to come away at all. The bank

[1] To Bradford Torrey. Portsmouth, December 31, 1892.

sloped before us to the water, and was covered here and there with trees, and these were full of birds. The bay was calm as peace itself, reflecting everything upon its opposite coasts, and the blue hills of Rockingham County dreamed in heavenly sapphire and amethyst streaked with snow on the horizon. We started up a huge eagle that flapped off over our heads, rising from some tall nut and ash trees near. We saw woodpeckers on the tree trunks, and crows trotting about the ground. Chickadees made the still air cheery with their sweet talk; there were grosbeaks, as tame as city sparrows, and snowbirds that were not tame; and a yellow-hammer flapped his wings like a golden apparition from a dark pine. The local name for them about here is "harry-wicket;" have you heard it? I like it, though I can't think how it originated. We saw a flock of other small birds, grayish and slaty, that flew with sweet quavering cries; they lit in an apple tree and made it alive; my brother said there must be as many as seventy-five in the flock. What were they, I wonder! What is a "siskin," by the way? Out in the stream, where the turning tide was floating big cakes of ice down the bay (to the Piscataqua River, just round the point to the north), we saw companies of jet-black

crows and snow-white gulls sitting together on the blocks and gliding down together, shining in the sun. We saw a flock of black ducks, a couple of white geese, some oldwives, and a string of sheldrakes; they flew low and were reflected in the glassy water. Now, was n't that a lot of birds to see in a winter morning? A variety, I mean. Two or three days ago we saw a tiny bird feeding on grass-seed by the wayside. We thought at first it was a wren, it was so very small, but it flew into a little tree and we saw it was longer, slenderer, with a long tail. It was gray underneath and dark olive-black on the wings with bars of white. It did not seem to be afraid, but somehow we could n't get a good look at its back, nor study its general aspect as we wished. We wondered what that could be.

I did read the "Beauty for Ashes" with the greatest pleasure, and thank you much for telling me. I cannot afford to lose anything you may write.

Your[1] dear little note just came, and it makes my heart ache for you, and for myself, and all of us. It is so hard, my darling Sophie, so cruel hard, not to see him again here, nor

[1] To Sophie Eichberg. Portsmouth, February 6, 1893.

with these eyes, in the old familiar places, in the old way. Oh, I feel it so deeply myself, so deeply and so sadly, and what must you feel! I know it all, all the ache and sorrow of it. If death, that change we call death, meant the end of life, then indeed might despair settle upon us, but it is only change and separation for the time being; desperately hard and sad, but not forever. Oh no, no, *no!* a thousand times *no!* At our longest, we stay here so little while, and then seek our dear ones in that selfsame road they have traveled: who shall doubt that we find them, with all their love for us, again!

Thank you[1] for your sweet letter and all your kind suggestions. I had already begun to "reef" my MS., and perceived at once, when I read it aloud, that it must be cut ever so much in places. Dear, you have given me a real helpful lift, because I have been doing this work without a particle of enthusiasm, in a most perfunctory manner, from the bits of notes I had made; and my mind has been so saddened by deep shadows for many months, somehow I had no heart in it at all. I am hoping, when I go to the Shoals presently, to

[1] To Sarah Orne Jewett. Portsmouth

get some of the real flavor of the place and the work into it. It does n't satisfy me one bit. I began to write the introductory chapter right off, and shall I send it to you as you said? I am *so* glad for every bit of criticism. I was so happy when I wrote the Shoals book — it wrote itself. I seemed to have very little to do with it anyway. But now the shadows are so long, and it grows so lonesome on this earth, and there is such a chill where there used to be such warmth and bliss!

Oh, you[1] dear and kindest, wisest and helpfulest! I thought I should remember every one and every word of your suggestions when you spoke them, but, alas! I rack my stupid and empty brain in vain for most of them, coming home to my turning, cleansing, ripping, patching, fixing-over dressmaker. These petty nothings have filled my head with only cobwebs, so that, when I begin my introductory chapter, those precious notes you gave me are vanished and I grope for them again in vain. The Pinafore going down river like a May-day procession I remember; the flowers being always young; the fruits of sweet and bitter experience, and the Greek thing I was to ask Roland for,

[1] To Sarah Orne Jewett. Portsmouth, February 5, 1893.

but the others are all gone. Perhaps you may remember. I am ashamed to be so stupid, but so many little cares come bothering me and taking what little sense I had. Pardon your loving

SANDPIPER.

How good you were to copy for me, and all! All this time and I have not audibly and visibly thanked you[1] for "Deephaven"! but really and truly in my heart I have thanked you every day for the lovely thing. I *never* did see anything so enchanting, and the illustrations! every one so charming! Those Woodburys must be wondrous clever people. Karl says: "Will you *please* write to Miss Jewett and tell her there never was anything quite so delightful as 'The Only Rose' story?"

I am waiting for the proofs of my small "garden" book, and I am the tiredest bird that ever scratched for worms. Have n't had any "girl" since I came from the Shoals, except a little slip as goes to school, and is n't much more than a rag-baby anyway. Have written to Flower to see if she has n't some young and needy being who wants to earn something and have a good home and be befriended. There must be plenty such, if one could find them. I

[1] To Sarah Orne Jewett. Portsmouth, 1893.

don't care a bit whether she knows anything or not: I have infinite patience to teach any honest creature.

Don't you and Mary ever come down to Portsmouth any more? *Do* come!

An[1] old man in a shop here the other day said to me: "I went to bed real comfortable after I had read your poem about your grandchild. I thought 't was beautiful." That was so unexpected, and pleased me so much, for I did n't know the old fellow much and it was so surprising.

I thought of ——, who would say: "How can you say God watches us with kindness, when you think of the wrongs done to humanity, the torments of Russian Jews and peasants, the agonizing exile of Siberia, the plagues, pestilences, and famines, that visit the earth, the crimes, miseries, and tortures that everywhere exist?"

I know it all, yet must I sing my little song to my little boy all the same.

I send you[1] one of Farquhar's catalogues.

[1] To Rose Lamb. Portsmouth, March 16, 1893.

[2] To Mrs. Horace Lamb. 47 State St., Portsmouth, March 25, 1893.

marked, as I promised, and I want to say about the marks that they stand against flowers that I know about intimately; and the more marks you find, the more charming and desirable is the flower. I dare say you know about them all, and I know there are many that are as beautiful, perhaps, which I have not marked, but these I have indicated are all old friends and dear, and I am sure of them.

I am sure you 'll have tulips and peonies (don't forget the *single* pink and white varieties of these) and lilies of all kinds, and don't forget the heavenly perennial larkspurs, — the divinest azure, rose, and saffron tints, — and sunflowers and hollyhocks and single dahlias (superb), kings' flowers, I call them, all colors; and the Oriental poppies, hardy and never failing and gorgeous beyond description; perennial phloxes, especially the pure white and the rose color; Hydrangea grandiflora, — all these you know; and the tall Japanese anemones that are heavenly beautiful. Dear me! I get out of breath with the perennials before I think of reaching the dear flower-seeds for annuals. Before I forget let me beg of you to have a bed of Iceland poppies, biennials that blossom the first year from seed, white, orange, and gold; get the mixed seed; they are simply enchanting. And

the Shirley poppies are the most radiant vision, of all delicate shades of pink, and white just flushed with rose; they make the garden look as if the dawn had fallen into it out of the sky. And annual stocks, or gillyflowers, are *so* satisfactory, — all colors and so fragrant. Wall-flowers are more fragrant than any flower that grows, I think. Don't forget the honeysuckles; the old monthly honeysuckle blossoms all summer and is most beautiful. Cobæa Scandens is a splendid, rapid climber, and its flowers most interesting and lovely, large bells that change from green to purple. There are so many I cannot mention half. Do have some rose campion, — rose of heaven, the dearest flower! — and sweet-peas: the loveliest, most refined of the pale-pink kinds is Princess Beatrice; the richest pink, Adonis, a fine grower; the best red, carmine invincible; the best white, Victoria; but all are beautiful. Amid so many splendid kinds one gets almost bewildered. Don't forget the butterfly, white with mauve edge, a beauty. All sorts of pinks, except the scentless Chinese, are delightful; and the Margaret pinks are annuals, blooming first year from seed sown in May. I have a boxful upstairs, all nicely started in egg-shells, to bloom in July.

I wish I lived near, to see and know about

the lovely garden you will have. I have n't begun to talk about the flowers as I wish, but I might talk all day and not have done. You will have splendid pansies, I know; they want *shade*, moisture (they must never get dry), and the richest stable manure. I am sure you will make a little Paradise. I wish, if there is anything you think I might tell you about to help, you would ask me. I should be so glad to give of my experience, which, though not large, is very thorough as far as it goes.

Do write[1] and tell me about yourselves. I hear Mr. Booth is better, at least the newspapers say so, and that he is going with you to Narragansett Pier. Alas, poor man! why cannot Fortune free him from his captivity of weakness and discomfort, if not of pain, and the worn-out body be dropped for a fresh and happy one! Oh, I trust, when my time comes, that I may be allowed to go *in a moment*. Death is not cruel, but life under such circumstances is terrible; the long suffering with no hope of recovery is the misery, not the touch of death that opens the doors into a fresh, new world.

Well, I want to know about it all, where

[1] To Ignatius Grossman. Shoals, June 4, 1893.

you are and how it is with you beloved four, parents and children dear, as well as with the poor grandfather. Do write to me. I only hope all is well with you.

Year[1] after next I am going to be sixty, and I am conscious of every bone in my skeleton every time I weed my garden, which is every day and pretty much all day. I have to keep out of doors to keep my health, and the time in my life has come when I am released from housework and can spend all the time I want to in my garden.

Oh, the birds! I do believe few people enjoy them as you and I do. The song sparrows and whitethroats follow after me like chickens when they see me planting. The martins almost light on my head; the humming-birds *do*, and tangle their little claws in my hair; so do the sparrows. I hope some lovely things will come from that packet of seeds for a wild garden; there are beautiful perennials among them.

How faithful and how kind you[2] are, always to remember me on my birthday! Your lovely

[1] To E. C. Hoxie. Shoals, June 4, 1893.
[2] To Feroline W. Fox. Shoals, July 1, 1893.

letter with its sweetly perfumed leaves was a real pleasure to me, and I thank you for it very heartily, and thank you for your interest in me and mine. Karl is with me. My two youngest sons are in Kittery. Roland and his dear little family moved down there in the first week of June for the summer. Since he has had a professorship in Harvard, he has such long vacations that I cannot be grateful enough.

The two grandchildren, little Eliot and Katherine, are fascinating to their grandmother! Indeed, I don't think I ever realized what "fun" was until I became a grandmother! Isn't it delightful?

I went over to see them the other day, and as Eliot and I were walking together and gathering wild strawberries, with the grass and daisies and buttercups higher than the little fellow's head, he said to me suddenly, apropos of nothing at all, "Are you very old, granna?" "Yes, dear," I said, "I am very old." He heaved a deep sigh and said, "I am very sorry." "But why, dear?" I asked. "Because," he said, "I don't want you to be deaded before I am!" He is only four years old, and troubling himself so much!

I am pegging away hard on the book, and I want to ask you[1] lots of things. All you say is so precious, dear. I have got a little plan of the garden, as you suggested, with places of everything marked, — a sort of little map. I have got the whole thing about done, the writing, but there is much copying and arranging of parts to make a proper unity. I have been so ill since the house closed, just about *dead* with the stress and bother of things and people, and feared to slip back to the hateful state of three years ago. The doctor said, "You are going to have the whole thing over again if you are not *mighty* careful," and mighty careful I have been and I am better.

I loved "The Hiltons' Holiday." How you have a way of making dear, every-day, simple things, like that, more precious and delightful than all the festivals and theatres and entertainments that ever refreshed the soul of humanity! It is so beautiful to do this in such an exquisite fashion.

I[2] am so delighted to hear of Edwina's "new departure," as it were; nothing could be better

[1] To Sarah Orne Jewett. Shoals, September 28, 1893.

[2] To Ignatius Grossman. Portsmouth, November 24, 1893.

than that she should do just this thing. No one could do it so well, and I am sure it will be the most interesting book imaginable, and so valuable, not only to the present age, but for time to come. I am glad she is doing it, — it is wise and right and fitting that she should. She will reap a reward in the gratitude of the world, and in the satisfaction of doing for her wonderful father what no one else could do, and of rendering full justice to his genius and his most marvelous powers, and all the beauty of his character, which no one knows so well as his dear, only child. I am perfectly delighted that she is doing it, I repeat, and congratulate her and you both with utmost love.

How gladly, dear Ignatius,[1] would I send you "Lilliput Levee," if I only had it here! It is out at the Shoals, and might as well be in Kamtschatka for any possibility of getting at it. I only bring a very few books in here, and I will try hard and see if I can't get it for you in Boston. Dear Ignatius, if you want the *loveliest* thing for your children, get "Parables from Nature," by Mrs. Alfred Gatty, and read "Not lost, but gone before," to your dear chil-

[1] To Ignatius Grossman. Portsmouth, January 19, 1894.

dren. The heavenliest thing, and as good for you as them. There is an illustrated edition, and do get it *right off;* you and Edwina will love it.

Mrs. Gatty was the mother of Mrs. Juliana Horatio Ewing, whose books for children are world-famous, — "Jackanapes," and "Lob-lie-by-the-Fire," and "Daddy Darwin's Dovecote," etc. If you have n't all her things, get them by all means at once! But "Parables from Nature" you must have, illustrated edition.

Mrs. Laura Howe Richards's "Nursery Rhymes" for children are so good! I dare say you have them, — "Little John Bottlejohn," etc.; capital for very little ones.

Do you[1] think this is all right? Please tell me.[2] Keep this a little secret, dear Rose.

O Rose, I wish I could see you again! When I ever shall get to town again I don't know. Like a limpet I am stuck fast to this

[1] To Rose Lamb. Portsmouth, January 20, 1894.

[2] Dedication of "An Island Garden," which Mrs. Hemenway, alas! did not live to receive: —

> To Mrs. Mary Hemenway,
> whose "largeness of heart is
> even as the sand that is on
> the seashore," this little vol-
> ume is affectionately inscribed.

spot. Have you seen Prentice Mulford's "White Cross" books? You would *love* them, they deal in such wonderful, splendid things.

I'm[1] so glad I'm here I don't know what to do. My Karl and I have been at work in the garden cleaning up sticks and "shack" and stuff, and pruning the roses and investigating, and having a beautiful time; and the sea looks soft and heavenly, and the song sparrows are singing like mad, and the hens cackling and the crowers crowing; and here comes the dinner, and I'll finish by and by.

This morning the Pinafore was going to Portsmouth, and Mr. Oscar looked at the barometer and saw it had dropped all of a sudden, way down. He cried out to Ed. to be off as quick as he could, for he knew that drop meant an awful northwester. He hurried them off, and Mr. Karl would go, too, to go to church, because it is Sunday. They hadn't been gone three quarters of an hour before all the devils in the black place seemed to be let loose! I never saw it blow harder. A schooner came in with both masts blown right out of her! and little dories off fishing almost swamped. They fear Kane is lost; all seemed to get in but he; everybody

[1] To Mina Berntsen. Shoals, March 31, 1894.

thinks he is lost. We were worried about the Pinafore, and Mr. Oscar sat right down here (telegraph is on the steward's desk) and asked Fisher, at Portsmouth telegraph station, to send a boy down to the wharf to see if Pinafore had got in, and answer came, "Yes, I will right off," and in a few minutes the answer came again, "Yes, the Pinafore is at the wharf." Just think how splendid! for we should have worried all day and all night till the Pinafore got back, and we were able to hear she was safe in ten minutes, soon as a boy could be sent down to the Appledore wharf and back to find if she was in.

I wish you could see our room. You never saw anything so splendid! There are five windows now, and three of them are big and fine and blow up and down with your breath, and the others are being fixed; and your bed and my bed to be in the new part, with gas over both, and every kind of convenience. Do you suppose we shall both die, having everything so fine? Perhaps not. And you are to have the old closet for your things, and a great big, new one goes from the door where my bed used to be to the wall, and it will hold everything. I wish I could get some patterns of figured muslin to make some new curtains; for we are

so far out, Mr. Cedric's house, and the Clarks, and Browns, and Noyes's will have a full view of us, and we 've got to look out for curtains. We can see the steamer coming into the wharf, and the sunset.

I cannot tell you[1] how beautiful it is to be here, and I wish for you every day. It is so still and heavenly and fresh and full of promise. I work all day long, mostly out of doors, and there are so many pleasant things to do. Not easy, there is a great deal of hard work, but I love it all; and Karl is so good and helps me with the heaviest, and we have such a good time together.

The garden is a wilderness of sticks and stalks and rubbish from last year, and it is a job to begin, after pruning the roses, to clear all this away, to dig up the hollyhock roots that have sowed themselves outside and transplant in the inside of the fence, to fork over and manure all the earth, etc.

I have my mother's big, sunny room, with one opening out of it for Karl; and the large bay window is full of tables, and boxes of seeds that I am watching with as much delight as if I had never done it before. It is such a pleasure.

[1] To Rose Lamb. April 15, 1894.

I am busy every instant, so glad and thankful to be here. No tongue can tell it; just to be here, it is all I ask. Sometimes I am afraid I enjoy it too much, and wonder what ever would become of me if I had to be away.

There are many storms and much cold weather, but there is plenty of work for outdoors and in, and the days are never long enough.

I *feared* we should get March weather at the wrong time.

I 'm so sorry for all the buds that must have been chilled and spoiled.

We[1] did not get a mail for more than a fortnight, and it was something prodigious. Now it is a week since the boat went to the land again.

The telegraph told us yesterday that little Cyril had died of scarlet fever. Oh, what a blow for them! How crushing! Such a little angel as he was, and how they idolized him! How I pity his grandmother, too!

Little Cyril, dancing on the lawn last summer, looking like a little winged angel, with his exquisite hair flying, — ah me! his father and mother can never be the same again; life can

[1] To Rose Lamb. Shoals, April 21, 1894.

never be the same to them. Heaven keep little, sweet —— and —— to their worshiping father and mother. By what a thread it all hangs, dear Rose, our earthly joy!

Your[1] letter just comes, and is a great happiness to me, — how great I really cannot express to you, and, to give you any idea of my pleasure in it, I must tell you that I have devoured every printed word of yours, since the first time I discovered you, with the most entire sympathy and loving appreciation. I was perfectly delighted last year to find in one of your Atlantic papers a quotation from some verses of mine, —

Like a living jewel he sits and sings.

Do you remember using it? I was so proud I wrote to Bradford Torrey about it, asking him if he had the happiness of knowing you. I am interested in all you have to say, and how I do wish I knew a fraction of what you do of the birds I love so much! They are indeed most dear to me, most charming. Last winter my brother made sixty martin-houses and put them up, and now we have more than a hundred in all, with a family in each. Everything we *can* do to attract the birds we do, and re-

[1] To Olive Thorne Miller. Appledore, Isle of Shoals, May 27, 1894.

joice in them with a continual joy. The blackbirds and kingbirds and song sparrows, whitethroats and bobolinks, live on the lawn half the time, and keep us in bliss with their voices and fascinating behavior. You see, in a little island like this, we have almost everything under our eyes, and are brought into most intimate relations with all the various inhabitants. We won't have a cat on the place. A cuckoo yesterday came and devoured the eggs in the song sparrow's nest under my window. What *can* be done under such trying circumstances as these, I wonder? This year two pairs of bobolinks are staying, and we breathlessly hope they are building somewhere, they have been here so long. All sorts of enchanting creatures come, just for an hour or two on favorable days; sometimes they will stay two or three, or a week, and vanish suddenly as they came. Last week, when I went early into my garden, a rose-breasted grosbeak was sitting on the fence. Oh, he was beautiful as a flower. I hardly dared to breathe, I did not stir, and we gazed at each other fully five minutes before he concluded to move.

I 'm glad you found my book worthy. We must adore these things, our birds and our flowers, all these manifestations of Divine

beauty, if we see them at all; don't you think so? What can we say except that their beauty is "heavenly" and "divine"? I never think of the critics when I speak; it is my way of praising the Lord, to adore his beautiful work. In the poem you quoted, —

> I stand and *worship* the sky and the leaves,
> The golden air and the brilliant sea,
> The swallow at the eaves, —

"worship" is the right word, it seems to me. There is such happiness in it!

I thank you so much for this dear letter of yours. I treasure it among my most precious things. Truly I have an enthusiasm for *you*, and I 'm an old woman, almost sixty, and enthusiasm at sixty means more than it does at sixteen, after one has been banged about through this strange and perplexing life of ours so many years. I wish I could see you.

With thanks and thanks, and a love that has always been yours,

I am yours most truly,
CELIA THAXTER.

MY VERY DEAR FRIEND, — I think you[1] can hardly imagine the delight with which I beheld your familiar handwriting again, just as firm

[1] To Mary Cowden Clarke. Appledore, Isles of Shoals.

and clear and fine as if six years had not passed over your lovely head since I saw it last. How well I remember the beauty of your soft, white hair, and the dainty cap with a little white satin bow like a moonbeam at top! I thought I never had seen anything so fascinating that day, long ago, when you welcomed so kindly the strangers within your gates. How good you were to us, all of you! And we have never ceased to gratefully remember it. My brother Oscar is sitting near as I write, and sends his dear love and says, "Tell her I don't want her to forget me," and wishes you had told us of "Portia" and "Valeria." They were charming! How well I remember the latter, making lace on the crimson cushion! and I still have the bough of olive lovely Portia gave me, pinned against a piece of black velvet over my writing-desk, where I see it every day.

I wonder — no, I am sure I have not told you I am a *grandmother*, and my hair is white as yours. I have two enchanting grandchildren, my youngest son Roland's little ones (we called him after that Childe Roland who "to the dark tower came"). One is five years old and one is three, and I am the only grandparent they have, and such a good time as I have with them! It can't be described! They call me

"granna." The eldest is a blond boy, Charles Eliot Thaxter, and calls himself Laliot, and is a born fascinator. And there is a little sister, sweet as a pink-and-white sweet-pea. My Roland is a professor of cryptogamic botany at Harvard and they all live in Cambridge, the university town, where I can fly to see them every now and then. From the pretty little town house which holds these my treasures, the children, peering from the windows or at their play outside, see me coming afar off, and raise such a shout that the whole neighborhood turns smiling to look as they tear up the road to meet me, and fling themselves breathless about my knees and into my arms, crying, "Granna, granna!" Laliot says, "Granna, I *adore* you!" and little Katharine cries, "Granna, I love you *every breff!*" (breath). It is so beautiful to find such an unexpected fountain of delight in one's old age!

Then here in my island my other brother, Cedric, has three little maids, Ruth, Margaret, and Barbara, the last only two years old; and they are a great pleasure, too, and keep one fresh, as nothing does so well as children. I think.

I hear from our dear Annie Fields constantly; saw her not long since. Age has

Celia Thaxter

touched her dark hair with gray, but she is quite the same. I mourn for your lovely garden. How I enjoyed walking about it with your brother that Christmas Day of 1880! I have been writing a book about my island garden and it is just out, and as soon as I can lay my hands on a copy I shall send one to you, within the next week, I hope. It is illustrated in color, and the pictures really give you an idea of the place, the island and the sea, and the wealth of bloom and color, and in one picture I am coming out of the porch holding little Laliot by the hand. It is a true likeness of my wilderness of bloom. Dear friend, I send most, most loving greetings to you and yours, your sister, all.

I scribble this little line[1] flying, as it were, to beg you, when the whirl of people passes and tranquillity settles once more upon our little world, to steal a moment and slip down here and let us see and know you; will you not? Some of us may be slipping out of this mortal state, and we shall never know each other in this particular phase of existence, which would be a pity, I think.

[1] To Bradford Torrey. Shoals, July 20, 1894.

And so, indeed, Celia Thaxter slipped away from those who loved her, leaving suddenly this beautiful, sorrowful world, wherein she had loved and rejoiced and sorrowed with the children of men. No letters, no record, no description, can express adequately the richness and tenderness of her nature; but in the vanishing of her large vitality she has drawn many a heart after her to scan more closely than ever before the slight veil swaying between the seen and the unseen.

In the quiet loveliness of early summer, and before the tide of humanity swept down upon Appledore, she went for the last time, in June, 1894, with a small company of intimate friends, to revisit the different islands and the well-known haunts most dear to her. The days were still and sweet, and she lingered lovingly over the old places, telling the local incidents which occurred to her, and touching the whole with a fresh light. Perhaps she knew that it was a farewell; but if it had been revealed to her, she could not have been more tender and loving in her spirit to the life around her.

How suddenly it seemed at last that her days with us were ended! She had been listening to music, had been reading to her

little company, had been delighting in one of Appleton Brown's new pictures, and then she laid her down to sleep for the last time, and flitted away from her mortality.

The burial was at her island, on a quiet afternoon in the late summer. Her parlor, in which the body lay, was again made radiant, after her own custom, with the flowers from her garden, and a bed of sweet bay was prepared by her friends Appleton Brown and Childe Hassam, on which her form was laid.

William Mason once more played the music from Schumann which she chiefly loved, and an old friend, James De Normandie, paid a brief tribute of affection, spoken for all those who surrounded her. She was borne by her brothers and those nearest to her up to the silent spot where her grave was made.

The day was still and soft, and the veiled sun was declining as the solemn procession, bearing flowers, followed to the sacred place. At a respectful distance above stood a wide ring of interested observers, but only those who knew her and loved her best drew near. After all was done, and the body was at rest upon the fragrant bed prepared for it, the

young flower-bearers brought their burdens to cover her. The bright, tear-stained faces of those who held up their arms full of flowers, to be heaped upon the spot until it became a mound of blossoms, allied the scene, in beauty and simplicity, to the solemn rites of antiquity.

It was indeed a poet's burial, but it was far more than that: it was the celebration of the passing of a large and beneficent soul.

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